

STEWARDSHIP VITALIZED

WALT N. JOHNSON





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BY WALT N. JOHNSON, B.A., D.D.

*Secretary of Steward League of Baptist Ministers,
Teacher of Stewardship in Mars Hill College.*



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INTRODUCTION



IN America we are now enjoying a period of unparalleled prosperity. Values seem to be fairly stable and there is reason to expect continuation of the present scale of comfortable living. The rewards of labor are well distributed, making it possible for all classes to share largely in the pleasures of material wealth. Never before did the average man possess so much of this world's goods. This is an age of practical materialism. Men and women love the world and the things that are in the world. *Worldliness* is rampant.

The author has in this volume pointed out with keen insight the dangers that lurk in such conditions. When goods constitute the world's good, strife is inevitable and disaster is imminent. The solutions to the problems raised by these conditions heretofore offered are *socialism* and *capitalism*. The solution offered by this volume is *stewardship*. If men can be brought to see, as the early Christians saw, that ownership of this world's goods is in God and God only, it will be easier to be economically just and socially and spiritually helpful. This conception of property, it is claimed by the author, must be the achievement of the world's next great revival. It would solve all the financial problems of all the churches and benevolent institutions of the world. Money would be available for all human needs,—temporal, intellectual, and spiritual. But the results would be even greater, if possible, than these because it would solve those mighty problems of national and social relations which now constitute the world's chief threat of universal war and reversion to barbarism.

One cannot read these pages without an instinctive feeling that the author is right. God must help us or we are lost. We must come to be a world of brothers by an inner transformation that only the faith of the primitive Christians can effect. This book is one of the strongest which has yet appeared on the great theme involved, and should have a wide reading. Wherever it is carefully perused its blessings will be abundant.

W. J. MCGLOTHLIN.

PREFACE

There is a flood of Stewardship literature to-day. This is the best religious sign of our times. This book ventures out to stress just one phase of Stewardship: its deep roots in conscious Christian experience. Very little, strange to say, has been said or written about this.

Stewardship cannot be vitalized until it has been realized in the experience of the redeemed soul. Stewardship is in both the atonement and Christian education. It will, therefore be realized in two steps: in a revival, and in schools. Stewardship must come into Christian experience before it can be wrought into Christian culture.

This volume is a study of the revival necessary to vitalize Stewardship. It is the hope of the author to offer a little later a study of the methods of Christian training necessary to apply Stewardship.

Stewardship Vitalized is the study now. *Stewardship Applied* will be our next study.

I am indebted to many for help in this work. Special mention should be made of Dr. W. J. McGlothlin; of President R. L. Moore; of Dr. John L. Hill; of the lamented Dr. John T. Christian; of Miss Beulah Bowden, who drew illustrative sketches for it; of Eva C. Johnson, my life-companion who has prayed and thought and worked with me through the long years on matters suggested in this volume.

Hundreds of ministers and laymen in conversation and conference have contributed to it. In fact, so many have helped so much that I can hardly feel the book is mine, except its defects.

In all references to the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men in this volume the necessity of regeneration in order to sonship is assumed; our attention in this study is focused upon the relation of the regenerated soul to *material* things and to other souls regenerate and unregenerate with whom we are *materially* bound up in this life. Let it be kept in mind that our chief interest in this discussion is *economic*, rather than *theological*.

Christian experience as the ground of Stewardship is an unexplored field of Christian thought just beginning to open up to us. These chapters are little more than fragmentary reports of a journey into this new field.

This volume treats of church life, organization and activity from the viewpoint of the democratic interpretation of Jesus Christ. The general reader, the religious leader of our day and students studying together in classes have all been in view in this study of the Vitalization of Christian Stewardship.

1926.

W. N. J.

SCRIPTURE BASIS

Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of the Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with *power* from on high. Ye shall receive *power* when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And these all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place, and suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spake forth unto them, saying, "Ye men of Judea, be this known unto you. . . . This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are all witnesses. . . . God hath made him both Lord and Christ" Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

Repent, be baptized every one of you in the name of Christ, was the answer to this question. They then that received his word were baptized; and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles, and all that believed were together and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. And day by day continuing steadfastly in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.—(Luke 24: 48, 49; Acts 1: 8, 14; Acts 2: 1, 2, 3, 4, 14, 38, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47.)

CHAPTER I

GOD'S POWER AMONG MEN



THE whole world is quaking with threats of social revolution and sparkling with hopes of religious revival. Which is it to be? There is danger everywhere.

The Only Safety Is in a Revival of Original Christianity

In the thunderstorm, there is no risk for the thunderbolt. We must get into touch with the original Power of Christianity. In the present world upheavals, there is no danger for the man or the church filled with God himself. All others and all else are at fatal hazards in times like ours.

While the French Revolution was seething in France, England, just across the channel, was on the verge of revolution, too. But there was no revolution in England at that time; in its stead came the great Wesleyan Revival. In the present world condition, the whole earth is likely to have a rapid spread of what is now happening in Russia, or of what may happen in any body of Christian people. In the former case, a world revolution; in the latter, a world revival.

A revival? What is it, anyway? God real again to his people. Just a fresh contact with the original Power that set Christianity off in the first century. That's what it is. With a sense of the Stewardship of Christians in property forging in a fast link between Christian experience and the material world and with the material world knotted into such complex and compact organization as it is commercially and physically, and with the wires for live contact laid

all over the earth by more than a hundred years of modern Christian missions, the original Power of Christianity cannot now break forth anywhere on a purely local, or even on a national scale; the whole world will be involved in it. A revival now that has not the vitality to be world-wide in its application and energy would be snuffed out. So Christianity now must refind its primitive almightiness, or be smothered. There is no escape from this alternative.

What we need now is return to serious study of the New Testament record of the origin of Christianity. If this New Testament record is true, we have the source of all necessary power for the spiritual conquest of the world uncovered in the first five chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

The New Testament Is God's Power-Book. The book of Acts is the power-house of the power-book. And the first five chapters of Acts are the engine-room of the power-house of the power-book. Let us in this engine-room find the power sufficient to vitalize Stewardship as the controlling principle of the business life of Christians in their contact with the huge modern business organization of all mankind. Then will start instantly a world revival of original Christianity.

But this world revival cannot come, unless we find again the sources of omnipotence in our Christian testimony to God. In our search for touch with the original Power, there are some simple, general self-evident truths that will help us:

I. SPIRITUAL POWER IS NOT ISOLATED FROM OTHER POWERS.

Jesus did not say, "Ye shall receive *spiritual power*." He said, "Ye shall receive *power*"—the generic word for power is used, dynamis—muscular strength, mental vigor, money, influence, mules, protection of angels, healing, working tools, steam-engines; anything that

can be called power or that furnishes power is included in Jesus' word here for "power," dynamis—"when the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

We emasculate Christianity when we, even in thought, divide spiritual power from other powers. It thus becomes a momentary emotion of the heart, an abstraction in our theologies, a dead mummy in our churches.

Whether there be no spiritual power, or whether all power in the universe be spiritual, we may not know. But we do know that we can know nothing at all of the Spirit except in his use of powers and things that we know. He is the breath of God; we can never detect the presence of breath apart from lungs, ribs, lips, muscles, bodies. If the Spirit comes into my life, I know him and show him in the beatings of my heart, in the thoughts of my brain, in the workings of my muscles, in the use of my money, in the manipulation of all that is under my control. If I am a Spirit-controlled man, then even my balled-up fist is a part of the Spirit's power; so likewise with every finger and toe. It is not spiritual power we need, but the Spirit himself in us using all the powers we have. Much of our talk about spirituality is heavenly moonshine.

The highest power is the power to use power. The higher we ascend in the ranges of power, the deeper the silence, the more impenetrable its mystery. Here we enter the realm of personality; we approach God. "God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God."¹ Then all our use of all kinds of power is a testimony either for or against God. There is no bar or wall in the soul that divides God, the cause, and man, the effect. We cannot hide ourselves in God without letting God reveal himself in us.

¹Psalms 62: 11:

Another truth leading us toward the original Power:

II. THE WORLD IS BRIMMING OVER WITH GOD'S POWER.

Noisy waste around us makes us forget silent power. There is more power in the little boiler-bolts of an engine than in its deafening whistle. There is as much power in the dumb rails of a railroad as in the locomotive that thunders over them, power enough in them to guide the locomotive; were it not so, the train would jump the track.

Power latent and silent everywhere: these words are written under an oak on a mountain side. Your arm would tire in holding out a gallon of its acorns for ten minutes. Many a limb of this giant oak holds out more than a bushel of acorns a whole season, and never tires. But this oak is just one tree. It takes silent power to hold up all the trees of all the forests of earth. But for the silent power of gravitation this mountain would tumble into the valley. This is just one mountain. Silent power holds all the ranges and systems of mountains in place.

This writer lived a year by a great dam of concrete costing six million dollars, wedged in at the falls of the river between two mountains backing up a lake one hundred and eighty feet deep and ninety-one miles around, driving three great turbine wheels each of which develop twenty-five thousand horsepower. Yet each square yard of the surface of the sun, science teaches, is hurling into space in every direction the equal in power of this dam, this lake and all these turbine wheels, and dynamos. Every two square yards of the sun's face smile down on the earth with more than the power of the greatest battleship man has ever built.

There is silent power enough in the bark and leaves and little limbs of a forest to cut down every tree in

it, saw it into lumber, kiln-dry it and dress it and put it on the market. In a Standard Oil Company tank full of gasoline, fourteen thousand gallons, making no more noise than a graveyard, there is enough power to drive a seven-passenger automobile all the way around our planet ten times. Henry Ford is quoted as saying that there is enough power in the alcohol to be made from potatoes grown on one acre of Michigan soil to plow that same acre of ground for a hundred years to come.¹

Power in wood, power in oil, power in coal; did men dream such a thing two hundreds years ago? Is there power in dirt? Who knows? Science and philosophy are coming fast to the conclusion that the ultimate thing in nature is not matter but energy—*power!* Some day there may be a motor made that will be run by clay and rocks instead of by gasoline.

God's power is glowing, sparkling, sizzling, blazing, working in every atom of matter around us. But poor blind men do not see it. It burns in every bush, with only a Moses to behold it now and then; the difference is not in bushes; the difference is in men. All this power is of the Spirit; for it is power of God and God is Spirit. The man who once knows God can never afterwards separate any phase of power that touches him from his sense of God.

God has placed man in the midst of this power; man is to be made the crown of it as fast as God trusts him with it; for man is made in the image of God and is to subdue the earth.

If the world is so full of God's power, and if man is to be God's image in his control over power, *why does man still have so little of power?*

Simply because man uses power in such a way as to defeat God's purpose and to ruin himself and his whole race. Man out of conscious fellowship with

¹*Popular Science Monthly*, July, 1922, p. 26.

God, in possession of unlimited power would wreck the world. When the Holy Spirit so comes upon a man that he is in complete fellowship with God, he can be trusted with power. Otherwise, he must be limited in power, kept down as a worm of the dust. There are some danger signals for us to watch in our search for the original Power.

III. MAN'S MISUSES OF POWER.

1. *Man Misuses God's Power Just to Get Mere Things. We Pamper our Bodies with Things.*

The more the soul is developed, the fewer things relatively it requires for its life. The more the body is pampered, the more things it demands for its comfort and pleasure. Whatever passion controls a man's body dictates the use of all power under his control in the getting of things that will satisfy his body. As long as the body is master, the power of God will be abused in simply getting and consuming things that add nothing to the stature of the soul; that really obscure the image of God in men.

Because God loves us and because the mere possession of things benumbs life, he limits the power of those who think that "life consisteth in the abundance of things that a man possesseth."

2. *Man Misuses God's Power Just to Make Noise and Display with It.*

He wants to show off at God's expense. He lifts himself up as a little god. His chief fear is that others may not find out that he has power. He wants others to look up to him. So he spends his life setting off little fire-works with God's power. All noise and display are waste of power.

I slept one night by the sea; in the lonesome hours I lay awake and listened to the roar of the waves. I asked, "Why are the waves so noisy?" Then came the answer, "Because they are all going to waste;

if they were not wasting their power, the Atlantic would be as silent as a cemetery."

The great source of power is the sun. Who has ever heard the sun whoop or yell? It makes no racket.

Proud, selfish, foolish, unregenerate men would use God's power to outshine God, if they could. They use all the power they can in that direction. Anxious as God is to share his power with men, he has to limit it to pitiable, almost imperceptible measure; else, he would no longer be God and his world would be wrecked.

3. Men Misuse God's Power Just to Rule Their Fellowmen with It.

There is in men the ambition to rule. It is a fragment of the image of God still left in us; great, but distorted and sadly fallen. God rules: proud men, in the pride of their hearts, would take his throne from him. But since they cannot do this, they desecrate every power of God that comes into their hands to get rule over their fellow-beings. Governments are the toys and tools of this ruling passion among men. God cannot be God and give over his power without severe limitations to the sway of the political instincts in man. God, the universal Servant, holds his power in check for the service of men; he will not turn it loose without bounds to arrogant men who want it only to rule men with it. Jesus says the greatest among us is he that serves: not he that rules. God's power is unbounded for serving; but it is definitely limited for ruling.

It is revolting to see how men use God's power to rule men; to make noises and display that render others jealous and afraid of us; to get things that others must obtain from us in order to have the bare necessities of life; to grasp the secrets and forces of

nature and the advantages of political arrangements and military inventions in such a way that men will be afraid not to obey our orders.

4. Finally, Man Fatally Misuses God's Power; He Uses it Just to Kill Men with It.

All other misuses of God's power among men lead inevitably to this dire and bloody misuse of it. In a world where men use all their powers to show themselves off, to get things to pamper their bodies, to rule others, they will first or last use all their power to kill one another. This is war; and there is no final escape from it anywhere in the earth so long as men use God's power for selfish ends. War is one of God's ways of limiting the misuse of his power among men.

When men come to this last and worst abuse of God's power entrusted to them, they use all the power in their reach to kill their own brothers, beings made in the image of their own Father. Only a few years ago Germany would have used every wheel of her industry to grind her way to the heart of France. The English people would have used every trade advantage, every ship, every coal mine, and every oil field in their domains to make Germany an inland lake. Even we American people would have consecrated all the resources of our whole continent to bailing dry the oceans, if need be, to get at the men working submarines in the bottom of the sea.

The next great war will be a wholesale desecration of God's power among men. In a world full of God's power, as this world is, populated with peoples capable of world-wide murder schemes, he allows men very little of power. For if he did not limit them, there is real danger that in a last inevitable, unbounded abuse of it they would annihilate the race.

There are four major misuses of God's power by men. Review them: getting things with it is

materialism; making noise and display with it is extravagance; ruling men with it is autocracy; killing men with it is militarism. Materialism, extravagance, autocracy, militarism—either of them by itself would ruin the world. But all four of them together are the trouble with our modern world, which is just another way of saying that men almost unanimously are trying to use God's power in the world and shut God out of its use. Under these conditions, of course man's power is divinely restricted. All misuse of power is dangerous. God would keep us safe.

Another truth pointing the way to the original power of Christianity, there is—

IV. ONLY ONE SAFE USE OF UNLIMITED POWER

This is, to *use it in testimony to God*. "Ye shall be my witnesses." This is not the imperative mood. It is the indicative. It simply states an unavoidable effect of receiving the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power; for being then in fellowship with God, you can but use power in witness of him. Jesus himself used all power vested in him while he was here in testimony to his Father. Now we are in Jesus' place, all the power that we have is to be used in testimony to him as the Son. There is no way for us to reveal the deepest in us but by the use of all kinds of power that we have. If the sense of God is fresh, immediate, impelling in us, we cannot make any use of power that denies God. The one common distinctive feature of all four of the misuses of power by men mentioned above is, every one of them is a denial of God, a wilful or an unconscious testimony against God; not one of them is a use of power in voluntary joyous service to mankind.

The kingdom of God is built on earth, not by force, but by testimony. Samson and Germany were

both powerful idiots. Force is use of power and touches only the secondary; it can destroy, but never creates; it deals with effects, not causes. It can not reach the primary facts of life: it deals with bodies, never with souls. It cannot win loyalty. It cannot teach. It cannot free. It cannot beget confidence. It cannot love, nor receive love. It cannot make people good.

Force can do only harm in the realm of religion; it makes faith hang upon earthly power and circumstance, brings on a State Church, makes it dependent upon wealth, buildings, social position, externals, gets it out of sympathy with the weak, makes it seek to dominate instead of permeate, justifies persecution, becomes cruel; men submit to its forms with rebel souls.

Wherever power is spent in the real service of men, it is used in testimony to God. Every expression of brotherhood among men is a confession of God's fatherhood. God the invisible, omnipresent, omnipotent Servant comes into view every time a man uses any of God's power to help his fellowman. Jesus, knowing that he had come from the Father, girded on the towel of service and washed his disciples' feet. The Greatest is the Servant of all.

For any soul, so identified with God in its immediate sense of his Spirit's presence that it could use no power except in witness that God is God and still our Father, there are no bounds to the power available. Of God's power in any man, when used faithfully in true witness to God himself, the miracles of Jesus while he was among men suggest the bounds. There is no pathos so deep as that of the way we lightly play at the Christian's immense business of using God's power all around us in the world to make God truly known to men.

But before these infinite powers already around us in God's world can be used by any of us in testimony to God and to Jesus we must meet—

V. THE SIMPLE CONDITIONS OF ATTAINING POWER

There is nothing more needed than a serious study of the conditions that preceded and surrounded the outbreaking of the original Power that set the gospel going in the first Christian century. There are just five of these conditions; they are very simple, and can be reproduced, every one of them, in our own day.

First Condition: We must be regenerated.

This should go without saying. But it is so fundamental that it needs to be repeated always.¹ Unregenerate hands can be trusted with but little of God's power. All those who shared in its outpouring at Pentecost were regenerate: Thomas was believing; Peter had bitterly repented; Judas had hanged himself. This condition can be complied with to-day; for the Holy Spirit still regenerates men.

Second Condition: We must be taught.

We often hear it said, just get a man truly converted and everything is all right. The only trouble about this statement is, it is not true. Teaching must follow regeneration. God never puts a premium upon ignorance. Those who shared in Pentecost were the most intensely and thoroughly taught company of people that ever assembled anywhere in history. Likely there was not an untaught person in the crowd. For years many of them had been eating, resting, sleeping, waking, talking, living with the Master-Teacher. All this time he had been teaching them. He was preparing them for the right use of power.

Can this condition be reproduced to-day? Certainly! Jesus the great Teacher is not with us bodily;

¹John 3: 1; 1 John 4: 4.

but he is with us personally—he is with us in the Holy Spirit. Jesus then could be only one teacher in one place at a time. Now we can have many teachers in many places at the same time, for the Spirit is everywhere.

There are even now evidences of a reproduction of this teaching condition throughout a large part of the world. There are now two stresses on teaching: the general insistence that established Christian educational institutions shall return to the first principles of Christianity, and the general taking up of the teaching work in local churches. Both these movements are lines of approach to the original Power of the gospel.

Third Condition: We must become unhurried.

With his disciples regenerated and well taught, Jesus was not yet ready to trust them with power. So he told them to tarry in Jerusalem for the power. God never pours unlimited power into a hurried life. When you see a man rushing in a mad hurry, you may know he thinks he is running after something more important to him than God, for with God a thousand years are as one day.

With the fresh teachings of Jesus glowing in their souls, with their Lord dead and risen from the dead and gone before them into glory, and with the greatest world mission of all the ages committed to them in the preaching of the gospel, it was reasonable for the disciples to be in a nervous hurry. But Jesus says, "No! Stay in Jerusalem. You are not ready!" And there in Jerusalem they tarried, not for several days as we often say, but for several years.

Here is the principal difficulty of our age in getting into touch with the original Power; it is too hurried. It feels it can do anything, but wait. Trains, ships, automobiles, aeroplanes, telegraphs, telephones, radio,

and all machinery are made to save time. But the more we have of time-saving machinery, the less time we have for unhurried waiting with God. Some of our largest religious conventions are cut down to two-day sessions, and most of sermons, supposed to be messages from God, are chopped off at thirty minutes. God will never be real to us again under these conditions.

But these conditions, hard and general as they are, can be changed. The rich now have plenty of idle time. Machinery is shortening the work-day of the working people. If we can only get leisure put to the right use, stop people from idle and empty amusement, get them to take life seriously, there is more time right now for waiting upon God by the multitudes than ever in all history; and it is increasing every day. This will come, not by closing up the movies and theatres and stopping the auto joy-ride and excursion train and the like, but by getting the great God so real to people that they will give him their real attention.

Fourth Condition: We must be of one mind.

"One accord"¹ is the expression in our English version of the Bible. This is a high state for a number of people to achieve; it is rarely reached. For this state of mind and soul in the New Testament record we have a great Greek word, *homothumadon*. Its meaning and music have room for swelling orchestras of coming ages. No one English word is equal to it. One-feeling, one-thought, one-purpose; all the faculties, longings, sentiments, memories, hopes vibrant in one tone. We catch a hint of the meaning of the word in music when we listen to all the strings, notes, reeds, pipes and drumbeats playing in tune together. We catch a hint of the meaning of the word in the morale of a perfect army, expectant, not one man

¹Acts 1: 14.

thinking of himself, forgetful of discipline and training, holding together with only one mind in millions of men, ready for instant total death in a charge to victory.

This was the state of mind among the first Christians. It was the most difficult condition of all to reach. It took months and years of the intensest teaching of the intensest teacher that ever taught to bring them to it. Even at that only a very small number of people were ready to enter it at the beginning. But it was achieved among a few; and almightiness broke out among men.

Can we meet this condition to-day? Yes, and that, too, without local limitations. We do not have to be "in one place" now. For our modern methods of long-range communication put minds into instantaneous contact throughout the whole human race. It is simply a question of getting into touch with enough people who really know God, of getting them world-taught as to God's purpose and power, and then keeping them at leisure long enough to think in unison the greatest thought of the universe, GOD! If this were done, it would meet this condition on a scale never attained before; then great cosmic energy, God immanent, would well up in the souls of men to transform and reorganize the world.

Fifth Condition, most important of all: We must be praying.

This is the most important condition; but it is the easiest. The humblest child can pray. And prayer is necessary in meeting all the other conditions.

But neither the act of one prayer, nor the repetition of a thousand prayers gives us the original Power. The very process itself of continued praying is the origin of power; for in it our spirits touch God. They "continued steadfast in instant prayer."

There are many ranges of prayer; the prayer of remorse, the devils may pray that; the prayer for forgiveness, sinners pray that; the prayer of fellowship, God's children pray that; the prayer of intercession, only the Saviour and those entirely at one with him ever pray that. Modern Christians must walk again the high, lonely, bloody way of intercession, with the disciples and with Jesus himself before we have complied with all the conditions for power which were met in the first church of Jesus Christ.

Get fast in mind all five of these conditions necessary for touch with the original power; regenerated, taught, unhurried, of one mind, praying. With all these met, God is released among us any time. With either of them unmet, God is bound. Reverently, say it! For unregenerate people would desecrate God's power to sinful ends. Untaught people would not know what to do with God's power and might do great damage with it. Hurried people would make a nervous, unconsidered use of God's power. People of divided mind would use God's power against one another. People who do not pray, being out of fellowship with God, would use God's power against God. There is no need that we ever ask God for more power but we need constantly to ask God to make us fit to be trusted with power. For we have, every one of us, all the power we are rightly using. God yearns to share his power with us; but he is limited by our lack of accord with him in the use of it. If we should be so possessed of the Holy Spirit as to be completely identified with God in all our thought and will, the limit of power at our disposal would be the limit of God's own power.

So the greatest encouragement we have in our search for the original Power is that *the supply of power is infinite.*

VI. THE SUPPLY OF POWER IS INFINITE

"And Isaac digged again the wells which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father: for the Philistines had stopped them."¹ So must we return to the original sources of life and power. They are constantly closed up by the enemies of righteousness. Most of our churches and schools are filled up wells. It is no experiment to dig out an old well; we already know the spout is there.

All through past Christian history, in every careful study of the beginnings of the Christian churches we have opened the fountain-heads of new eras.

1. There is no measuring the power set free in men at Pentecost.

No device can measure it. It can be calculated by no system of mathematics. It is beyond physics, or chemistry, or electricity. We cannot fathom its causes or effects. Of only some of its phases are we aware. Wonderful things happened instantly.

In a flash, the long, tedious, deep teachings of Jesus became plain. In a flash, his death shone with its significance. In a flash, the risen, ascended Christ was a reality. There suddenly burst on the assembled disciples a world-view, for immediately the barriers of language broke down. Bold preaching began; for Peter, cowardly, lying Peter, wilting a few nights ago under the gaze of a giddy girl and denying his Lord, is instantly transformed into a flaming apostle. He was the mouthpiece of a situation surging with God's power.

A crowd gathered. They were convicted of sin. They cried out in repentance. They were buried in baptism. They were filled with awe. They were lifted into holy fellowship with one another.

¹Gen. 26: 18.

Call this a case of "mob psychology"? No! It was a crowd sizzling and thrilling with a sense of the immediate presence of the great God.

May we expect Pentecost to be repeated? No; perhaps never exactly again. But we shall have

2. Even enlargements of Pentecost.

What the first Christians experienced of the Spirit was not the full harvest; it was only the first fruits. It was the outburst of an underground stream running through all the past appearing here and there in men along its way. It was the beginning of the great swell of the stream of the sense of God's actual presence in men as it goes flowing on wider and deeper and stronger into all the future of mankind. We go back to Pentecost not to seek some past power of God, but to find out how we may now get into touch with the ever-present God himself in the use of all power around us.

We should humbly realize that we need more power to do God's work now than the early Christians needed. They had a world-view in a local situation; now we, sad to say, often have a local view in a world situation. Wonderful things are going to happen when modern Christians get a world view in the present world situation. The battle-line of the kingdom has lengthened all through the ages and the battle has waxed hotter every foot of its length. The world is growing worse and better all the time, and very fast, too, right now. The bad in it is getting worse and stronger, more intelligent and better organized. And the good in it is getting better and stronger and more intelligent and better organized. The conflict between the bad and the good waxes fiercer. The contest girds the whole earth.

We actually need more power for God's work than Christians had in the first century. It takes more

power to carry on a work than it does to start it. Jesus only *began*—that little word “began” in the first verse of the first chapter of Acts is a key-word to both the Gospel of Luke and to the Acts of the Apostles. He began his work and his teaching while he was on the earth. It was to be continued by his disciples after they had come into touch with the source of power open to Jesus. Acts is the record of this continuation of the work of Jesus; but it is an unfinished book; it breaks off at the end without ever telling what became of Paul on trial.

Jesus saw the necessity for enlarging powers among his followers and foretold it; “He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also; and *greater* works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father and whatsoever ye shall ask in his name that will he do.”¹ We to do “greater works” than Jesus did! Yes. How? Why?

Not by force, not by argument, but by convincing testimony of what Jesus was and began to do and teach while among men. But did not Jesus say on the cross, “It is finished”? Indeed. But he was speaking of the making of the atonement. We are charged with the operation of the atonement. For instance, when the last spike was driven in the last cross-tie on the continental railroad, the road was finished; but just then the operation of the road began. It could not begin until then. No freight and no passengers could pass over it until then. So Jesus finished the fact of salvation; but we are here to make salvation effective. Talk about a “finished atonement” is often one of the devil’s deceptions.

Salvation was not finished in the earthly life of Jesus. Jesus was a carpenter, lived one life on earth, and that life was complete. But he was never the

¹John 14: 12, 13.

father or mother of a family; never a railroad conductor; never a member of a labor union; never a citizen of our modern world. Christians are now filling millions of relations in human life that the bodily Jesus never filled. But his Spirit, his teachings, his sufferings are to be carried into all these relations, until all the life of a saved race is to be filled with Jesus. We are to do this: the Holy Spirit in us puts us into the right use of power to accomplish this; we are "filling up what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ." Jesus Christ, once confined in a body in one place, is now as the Spirit brings us into identity with him to be extended into every trade, every family, every corporation, every labor union, every government, every community; and in every case he is multiplied by the number of people in it identified with Christ in a first-hand experience of the Spirit.

In a world heaving between universal revolution and universal revival, our only safety is in renewed touch with the original Power of the Christ: touch with the loving God in all our uses of the ordinary powers of the world that might blow off mankind into anarchy and chaos. Once that touch is established, revolution is avoided and revival is assured. Only God can keep us safe now, by rekindling in us the sense of his own presence.

CHAPTERS II-VIII

SCRIPTURE BASIS

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cypress by race, having a field sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain thine own? And after it was sold was it not in thine own power? How is it thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapt him round, and they carried him out and buried him.

And it was about the space of three hours afterwards, when his wife not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much. But Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out. And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things. (Acts 4: 31—5: 11.)

CHAPTER II

THE NEGLECTED REVIVAL



ESUS told his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem for the promise of the Spirit. We read the account of their waiting for power as if it were all over at the end of the second chapter of Acts. But not so! They were still tarrying at Jerusalem at the end of the seventh chapter. Every experience of the Spirit that the church at Jerusalem had was a part of the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit to the tarrying disciples. All that happened to the first Christians until they were scattered by persecution was but part and parcel of the promised preparation for their work in carrying the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. We are in the habit of—

I. CHOPPING OFF PENTECOST

And trying to crush it into the first two chapters of Acts. This way of studying the record cuts the life out of it. The work of the Spirit in a church is not to be limited to one manifestation, and then all other experiences of him to be conformed to that one manifestation. And yet, that is just what we have been trying to do in most of our study of the Spirit's work as set forth in the New Testament. There is no telling the harm this habit of study has done; it has deflated our Christianity.

What happened on the day of Pentecost is no standard of the work of the Spirit in the churches of Christ; it was only the beginning of his larger work in the world. It requires a study of all the experiences that

New Testament Christians had of the Spirit to get the necessary conception of his work in the churches.

Review the Record of the Neglected Revival of the First Church:

We have it in Acts 4: 31 to 5: 11. Read it again carefully. It is the account of a work of the Spirit just as important, just as spectacular, just as significant as the occurrence on the day of Pentecost.

The record reads: "And when they had prayed"—that's what they were doing on the day of Pentecost—"the place where they were assembled was shaken"—an earthquake, or something like it; more than happened at Pentecost—"and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"—all that could possibly happen to any people on any day, Pentecost or any other time—"and they spake the word with boldness"—just what one of the number did at Pentecost, Peter—"and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul"—more than happened on Pentecost; the church was integrated into a living body with "one heart and soul": it was now no longer a mere mass-meeting of believers, but a living organism of the Spirit. Most of our churches in their experience of the Spirit's work are hung up high and tight and dry and dead somewhere between the second and the fourth chapters of Acts.—"And not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own"—here is the climax of this second great manifestation of the Spirit to Christ's followers: the Spirit of God here blasts out the foundations in Christian experience for the stewardship of property; for the truth of stewardship cannot be got into the human conscience until the lie of ownership is thrust out. So under a mighty spell of the Spirit in the first of all the churches of Christ there suddenly came the unanimous conviction that man does not own property; this was not a matter of logical conclusion, but of immediate experience.

There are twin impulses in the souls of young converts and in the souls of revived Christians. One is *evangelic* concern for the lost souls of men; the other is *economic* concern for their suffering bodies. Andrew is an example of the one—his first thought was of his brother Simon, “and he brought him to Jesus.”¹ Zacchæus is an example of the other—his first thought was of the physical needs of other men, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.”² Pentecost was Andrew’s impulse made mighty by the Holy Spirit; three thousand souls were converted at once. The neglected revival was the Zacchæus impulse made mighty by the Holy Spirit; they began to sell houses and lands, to share goods, and Ananias and Sapphira were killed for trying to play false with God in money matters.

Most of our revivals these days fiddle themselves out on the Andrew string. The Zacchæus string is seldom touched in our protracted meetings except to raise a collection for the evangelist. There is no wonder that modern Christianity is a pale pauper.

In the neglected revival there is the account of how this unanimous conviction as to property among the first Christians worked out in the peculiar local condition that existed in the community at that time, telling how Ananias and Sapphira playing false with their Christian experience as to property were put instantly out of the way, the lone death miracle in a New Testament church punctuating the truth of God’s ownership of property, as distinctly a work of the Spirit as was even the sermon of Peter at Pentecost, equally impressive and more dramatic.

If you are willing for this second wonderful work of the Spirit in the first church to blaze out in your soul with its fundamental significance, read straight

¹John 1: 42.

²Luke 19: 8.

through from the thirty-first verse of the fourth chapter to the eleventh verse of the fifth chapter in utter disregard of paragraphs, chapters and verses. For the paragraphs and chapters and verses are not parts of the Bible any more than the numbers of our hymns are parts of our church music; they are just devices for finding the parts of the Bibles we wish to find; they were not used in the original manuscripts of the Scriptures.

This second work of the Spirit at Jerusalem in integrating the church into a living body with one heart and soul and expelling the delusion of property ownership out of the Christian heart is no "miniature reproduction of Pentecost."¹ It is a rounding out of the experience that the Christians had on the day of Pentecost. Relatively speaking in Acts II, we have the impact of redeemed souls on other souls; likewise in Acts IV, we have the impact of redeemed souls on material things in their dealings with other redeemed souls. One is the atonement; the other is stewardship. Both the atonement and stewardship are in the New Testament, and both of them must be vitalized by the Spirit, just what happened in the Jerusalem church.

If Pentecost is the beginning of the dispensation of the Spirit, then his first great work after Pentecost was

To Give the Gospel Its Economic Setting.

This we have in the fourth and fifth chapters of Acts. Displaying themselves here to our view are the elemental energies of a new age among men. We need to refind them, get into touch with them and stay in touch with them.

We have shied around this second revival in the first church, because we feared there was radicalism in it, communism, socialism, bolshevism, or something else. We have, all through the centuries, been at great

¹McDaniel, *The Churches of the New Testament*, p. 105.

pains to explain it away so as to keep our interpretation of Christianity in harmony with the accepted economic order. A certain Christian college president recently referred to this experience of the early Christians as "the extravagance of a young religion which had not quite found itself." It is practically cut out of our modern shorter Bible. We shall see later that this experience of the Jerusalem first Christians was not only not socialism, but that it is a sign board showing us the only sure route away from state socialism.

An old man bowed over his table looking at two specks on it. "Are these specks nail-heads, or are they dead flies? I can't see. Oh, I know, I'll blow a strong breath and find out." So he blew a strong breath. "There!" he exclaimed, "yes, that's it. One is a dead fly; it is blown away; but the other is a nail-head, it is fast, it is a part of the table; it can not be blown away." Is this ignored work of the Spirit in the first churches recorded in Acts IV and V a dead fly or a nail-head in the construction of original Christianity?

Is it written in by design or by accident by some strange hand? Or is it of genuine record? The textual and historical evidence in favor of its genuineness is unimpeachable. If it tells of an occurrence that was inherent in original Christian experience, does it not condemn our present evangelism as woefully partial and superficial, imbecile?

We confront the necessity of either eliminating the latter part of the fourth and the first part of the fifth chapters of Acts from our New Testament, or else of finally giving serious attention to *the economic impulse of original Christianity*.

II. THE ECONOMIC IMPULSE OF ORIGINAL CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Here three points rise for consideration:

1. *Economics and Christianity Now Separated*

Economics is the science that deals with "wealth, or the material means of satisfying human desires." Christianity is God the Father revealed to man in Jesus Christ living by the Spirit in men while they live together as brothers. We have been allowing ourselves to think of economics entirely apart from Christianity; even the term "economic man" is defined as "an hypothetical man supposed to be free from altruistic sentiments and motives interfering with the effects of a purely selfish pursuit of wealth and its enjoyment."¹ The economic world is now thought of as having no God in it. Economics, then, instead of Christianity, has mastered the modern mind. And Christianity and economics have drifted so far apart in our thoughts that it bewilders us to try to think at all of Christian experience in economic terms. But we must so think of it if our Christianity is to have vital practical contact with the modern world. Godless economism is worse than atheistic evolutionism and our churches have been flirting with it. While professing Christianity, we have been thinking in terms of materialism, and half-shares in Christianity will not work.²

But with economics and Christianity separated,

2. *The Economic Interest Is Now Supreme in the World.*

Mankind is now under the reign of the economic. Our age is under the sway of the power of property over the souls of men. Strong individuals and mam-

¹Webster's Dictionary.

²Joseph Fort Newton.

moth corporations play the game. This contest for economic supremacy is intensified and universalized by machinery, education and national programs. "The nineteenth century enlarged the possessive at the expense of the creative instinct; it raised in more crucial form than ever the old question of the choice between God and Mammon."¹

The economic is now in the center and the political and religious are off on the rim. The economic interest does not hesitate to seize political power and hurl governments into war; it does not hesitate to deny religion financial support and force it to beg for its life. Rent, interest and profits are considered inviolate; the souls of men often count for naught. The foreign policies of governments gradually came to be dictated by the interests of private owners of property among the citizens, till the World War went off.²

The economic as the controlling interest of mankind has now come to the apex of its power; it must loosen its hold on men; for under its unlimited rule among the political powers of the earth, disintegration threatens to set in everywhere. The economic collapse of Europe is a symptom. We must look below and beyond the economic to find the force that is to unify the world. Thoughtful men are being driven everywhere into a desperate study of religion as the world's only unifying hope.

Now is the time for us to delve into the origin of Christianity as the destined universal religion of a united world, to find

3. The Bottom Economic Truths of Primal Christianity.

God's eternal ownership of property and temporary possession of it by men dealing with one another as

¹Harry F. Ward.

²Wells, *Outline of History*, p. 768.

sons of God and as brothers among themselves; these are bottom truths of the gospel, economically speaking. This is not theory; not even mere doctrine; it is immediate soul experience when men face the God of the Christian. It does not have to be reasoned out; it is an intuition of every redeemed soul. It is elemental in Christian experience. It is well for us to get it forever fixed at the bottom of all our economic thinking that these truths became a unanimous conviction among the first Christians—"Not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own."

This sense that man is not the owner of property is inherent in very Christianity itself. A man may think of God as impersonal, merely as force, mind, energy, love, justice, etc., and still feel that he is himself the owner of something—that is, just be a Pagan right on. But no man can face a personal God and give his own self to him as the Christian does in repentance and faith and baptism, and then after that claim anything as his own apart from God. The first Christians did not have to think this truth out; they felt it; they knew it; they were of one mind on this point, without a dissent.

The Pagan idea of human ownership of property permeating our civilization has made it what it is: Mammon is its god. Is property God's or man's? That is the supreme issue, both religious and economic. It is to be decided in the next great revival of original Christianity. If it should be answered wrongly there are anarchy and disintegration ahead for the whole world.

Illustration: Two visitors stood at the main entrance to an insane asylum. There sat on the steps in front of them a poor inmate of the institution, eyes wild, high-standing collar, ragged neck-tie, his upper teeth gone. One of the visitors introduced the inmate to his companion, "This is Mr. Burns, Mr. Jackson."

Drawing back, the lunatic solemnly said: "Burns is not my name; I am the I am." Both visitors looked into the face of the insane man and pitied him. They saw in him the last leap of human conceit, vanity unbound from sanity. But as they walked on away from him one visitor said to the other: "Not all the insane are inside the insane asylums. I saw a man the other day in an automobile; as he drove by me, I knew from his actions he was saying to himself, 'In this machine, I am the I am.' I saw a farmer strutting across his broad acres saying to himself, 'On the inside of these fences, I am the I am.' " Then the other visitor answered, "Yes, I, too, saw a man standing with his hands in his pockets. I could not hear his words; but his thoughts were in his face. He was thinking, 'In my pocket-book, I am the I am; there is no God there but me.' Then I saw a hardware merchant, a banker, a stockholder in a corporation; each was saying to himself, 'In all matters of property, I am the I am; in property affairs, there is no God but me.' " Then both visitors agreed that all such men were economically and religiously insane, still at large. "Well, well," sighed one of them at length, "after all, from one angle our whole modern civilization is one vast insane asylum; that is, on the subject of owning property." The economic task of Christianity is to get the world sane on one point: God is the real owner of all property. Men in possession of it are his stewards.

Then things will begin to become quiet and prosperous in the world's industry and commerce. The passion to own property will subside; the joy of co-operation in large production of property will take its place; fraternity and justice will rule in the distribution of property.

For the remedy of the world's economic ills, back then to original Christianity: "Not one of them said

that aught of the things he possessed was his own. . . . They had things common . . . sold houses and lands and brought the price and laid it at the apostles' feet," etc. What, back to radical communism like this! There is no use shying around this experience of the first church for fear of being radical; there is nothing so radical as real Christianity. But the practice of the early Christians was—

III. NOT SOCIALISM

Original Christianity was the very opposite of modern socialism. It was a realized fellowship among men *above* property; socialism is an attempted fellowship *in* property. This is a vast difference. Socialism would clip men off equal by law. Vital Christianity lengthens them to equality by grace.¹

1. *We must distinguish between the state of mind in the first church and the local temporary expression given to that state of mind, between motive and method, in meeting the peculiar situation in Jerusalem at that time.* The unanimous state of mind was, "not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own"; the expression given to this unanimous state of mind was, "They sold houses and lands and had things common." This state of mind is to be universal and eternal among genuine Christians in all places and at all times; the particular expression of this state of mind called forth in Jerusalem was local and temporary. It was not repeated, so far as we know, in any other New Testament church. The state of mind is fundamental; the expression of it is an incident.

The conviction of God's ownership of property, even if latent, is always present in genuine Christians. But it does not find uniform expression everywhere.

¹See Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Order*, p. 120f.

It is often unexpressed, dormant, even repressed. It is not to be confined for expression to any theory, or system, or program of men. This conviction of God's ownership comes of a direct experience of God in the soul; it does not bind, it sets free. It capered in hilarious freedom in the first church.

Jesus put his signature to no system of any kind. The trouble is men have been trying to work up a social system out of the experience of the Jerusalem Church. Men are more interested in systems than in motives. Jesus made no attempt to systematize the truth; he personalized it. Thus he set men free with it.

Incalculable damage has been done to Christianity by trying to harden this first outburst of Christian economic emotion in a unique situation into a cast-iron mould for all kinds of situations and by trying to pour all molten Christian economic impulse into that same mould ever afterwards. What the world needs is not the system, but the motive of the first Christians. Their motive is an unfailing and unvarying fountain; their system was only a temporary ditch to convey the blessed stream to where its waters were needed. We can dig deep ditches to dry fountains. But overflowing fountains will find their own outlets; and no two of them will be alike. Our schemes to control the outlet are the trouble; socialism is one of the most troublesome of these schemes. Then study this economic experience of the first church, not to find an outlet but to get to the fountain.

2. In selling and giving their property the early Christians acted voluntarily.

There was no law in the matter. It was no condition of admission into the church. It was free impulse. Some, perhaps many, maybe most of them, did not sell their property. If not so, why is the name of only a single one, Barnabas, given who sold and

gave his property? Why does Peter tell Ananias he was not obliged to sell his property?¹

Socialism is the church of the unregenerate. It is an effort to restrain by law unconverted men from the wrong use of property. Christianity is the Spirit of God in men inspiring them to the right use of all property in their possession. In placing their property at the feet of the apostles, they only confessed that the apostles for the time being could make a better use of it for the common good than they could themselves. This was no thought-out communistic plan; it was just common sense and human fellowship acting together in an emergency while they were all filled with the Spirit. Christ in the heart makes us in a free spiritual democracy want to do in love more for our brothers all over the world than we could be forced by law in a socialist state to do for our neighbors that live on the same street with us in our home town.

3. They could not have sold their property to give it away if they had not been living under a government that protected its subjects in the right of possessing property.

Without this protection in the rights of property, nobody in Jerusalem would have bought the property of the Christians when it was offered for sale. The practices of the first church could not be repeated under a commune government of any kind. No man can avow God's ownership over anything which he does not himself possess; there can be no practice of the principle of stewardship in any piece of property, except by one who is protected in the possession of it. Civil laws for the possession of property are necessary to give stewards of God the right to practice stewardship; they are a protection against thieves, cheats, robbers, crooks, cut-throats. Private property is a

¹Acts 5: 4.

necessary institution in a civilization built upon the principle of stewardship; but private ownership of property is a vastly different matter.

The early Christians in their new attitude toward property still remained a part of the old economic order, they accepted its standards of value; they did not try to run the real estate dealers out of the community; they traded with them still. When we restore original Christianity in our modern world, it will not bring on a revolution any more than planting a field with wheat will dynamite it; it grows up and covers the field with waving grain. The acorn dropped into the fence-jam does not blow a hole in the ground and destroy the fence; it just grows up and transforms the ground and air and rain into a great up-standing, storm-defying tree, while the fence rots away.

Those who fear the approach of socialism to-day had better flee as fast as they can into the economic foundations of Christian experience. For original Christianity inspires men to right use of property which alone successfully heads off radical propaganda for socialism. Real Christianity reinforces and transforms the right of property possession by the divine right of the Christian to be protected in putting his property to God's uses among men.

4. Original Christianity heightened, intensified, purified the right of possession over property.

This becomes clearer once we see the difference between the ownership and the possession of property. Perhaps always in our law-books and courts we shall speak of owning property; but the word will be used only in the sense of a right to hold possession of it. Possession is the right to hold and use as against other human beings. That's all it is. It does not touch animals, rabbits, buzzards, boll weevils; nor heat nor cold nor rain; nor cyclones nor floods, nor earthquakes; nor God.

But once God the Owner of all property becomes more real to a man or a church than property itself, the possession of property becomes a sacred right; it is then a right to possess for the sake of helping other men; it is a right for the sake of acknowledging God with it; it is a right akin to the right to sing praises to God; it is a right that may become as sacred as the right to pray to God. Property then becomes personal; it is then capable of spiritual uses. The Spirit of Acts 4: 32 would impel Christians in our day to possess all possible in order to acknowledge God as the Owner of it. Property then rises so high in significance and worth that it can never be submerged under any dead level of materialistic communism. The first church stood for the protection of even Ananias and Sapphira in their property rights,¹ but Ananias was killed because he lied about his experience of God in property matters.²

5. Further still, original Christianity stands out in contrast against both socialism and capitalism.

While vital Christianity is never to compromise with socialism it must also stand out in defiance of capitalism. If we leave God out all property legislation tends either toward socialism or toward capitalism, or is a nice balance between them.

Socialism says, "Man owns property which is to be controlled by society instead of the individual as far as possible." Capitalism says, "Man owns property which is to be controlled by the individual instead of society as far as possible." Original Christianity says, "No, Socialism; you are built on a lie; man does not own property. Capitalism, you are built on exactly the same lie; man does not own property."

Yes; that's it. Socialism and capitalism are founded on the same falsehood, man's ownership of the earth

¹Acts 5: 4a.

²Acts 5: 4b.

without regard for God the Owner. Genuine Christianity as experienced by the first Christians in a fresh realization in their own lives of God as the Owner of the earth and of all redeemed men and women as sons and daughters of the Owner, rises heaven-high between socialism and capitalism and defies them both. It declares to their teeth that property is not owned by men, corporations, or nations; it is owned by God. Our civil laws concerning property are only temporary agreements among men, as all democratic government is based on "upon the consent of the governed."

Capitalism and socialism are now world questions. Many times has it been predicted that the Soviet Government of Russia would soon fall. But it has outlived Lenine. It has survived the fall of Trotzsky. It still stands. The Communist Party of Russia with over 500,000 members makes demands of its members greater than the churches make of their communicants. It is said to require from six months to three years for a person to get into its membership.

This party in control of Russia has become the storm centre of socialistic propaganda throughout the world. Its emissaries are everywhere. China, confused and uneasy about her own government, mistreated by the capitalistic nations, exposed to Russia on thousands of miles of inland frontier, is threatened with it. If the Chinese should succumb to this teaching as to property, over a third of the world's population would be under socialistic regime.

And this Bolshevistic propaganda is beginning to tell in China, too. Our Christian missionaries feel it. Recently one of them declared: "We shall have to go back and restudy the Christian teachings as to property, or else we lose the Chinese; some of them already regard us as mere emissaries of western capitalism."

An uncertain Christianity afraid of either socialism or capitalism is doomed now. It must in one case become a pale sister of socialism; in the other case, a lackey of capitalism. Else, it will be ground to powder in the conflict between the two. But when a Christianity certain of God the Father and Owner is boldly preached and generally accepted and thoroughly trained into men and women and practically lived out in the economic relations of men, a new day will break on earth; and in this daybreak both socialism and capitalism will melt away as morning fogs.

In the first days of the first church we find not the beginnings of state socialism, but the fundamentals of a Christian economies, still undeveloped after two thousand years of Christian history. The warm glow of Christian love cannot run into the "dismal science of economies." That's the way we have generally thought of it. The only way that Christianity can get into economies is to melt its way in. That it must do; but for this entrance its primal fires must be rekindled in the souls of men. For Christian economies we shall use the word—

IV. ECONOMIA.

That is Stewardship; Christian Stewardship of wealth is the economic side of vital Christianity. All through the Bible the word steward has primarily an economic bearing. Only in the latter part of the Bible, in the writings of Paul and Peter¹ does it refer directly to matters spiritual, a secondary meaning of the word. Our English word Stewardship comes from two Old English words: *sty*, pig-pen and *ward*, guard; so originally a steward was a pig-pen guard. To many the word still smells of the sty. Cowherd would be the same word among cattle raisers. Shep-

¹ 1 Cor. 4: 1, 2; Titus 1: 7; 1 Peter 4: 10.

herd would be the word among sheep raisers. But steward (sty-ward) was the word among our hog-raising ancestors. A steward of God is one who attends to God's stock. Pigs were one of the primary economic necessities in an Old England family; so steward is an economic word.

But the main word in the Greek New Testament For Stewardship is our very word economics itself—¹ *oikonomia*, household management in the absence of the master of the house. Why not anglicize it and still use it?—E-c-o-n-o-m-i-a! There is music and modern meaning in the word.

Economia, housekeeping for God. It carries the idea of a family; a father and children, brothers and sisters; all its material goods used in love, for the good of all, and to please the Householder and the Father. That was the ideal and the spirit of the first church. It is the situation or the aim of all true children of the heavenly Father throughout the earth now. We Christians are keeping house for our Father and his children. We are God's economians throughout the world.

The kernel of the science of Economics is not wealth, but man's relation to wealth. The central interest in Christianity is man's relation to God. So in *Economia*, Economics and Christianity come together; for civilized man has inescapable relations to both God and wealth.

The point of penetration for Christianity into the economic world is—

1. *The Blasting Away of the Simple Fundamental Falsehood that Men Are the Owners of Property.*

This one lie, now generally accepted as truth in most of our present economic theories, once punctured with

¹In such passages as Luke 16: 2-8; 1 Cor. 4: 1, 2; 1 Peter 4: 10. The same word is translated Dispensation in 1 Cor. 9: 17; Eph. 1: 10; Col. 1: 25.

the sharp-edge of the universal truth *that God is the Owner*, the partition between religion and economics is rent in twain from top to bottom. There is no more sacred and no more secular among mere things; the difference between sacred and secular passes at once into the realm of persons. The whole domain of economics becomes the field of Christianity.

The trouble with us is we have thought of God's ownership of the earth as only a theological doctrine. A revival will break out among us when we really discern that it is an economic truth. It is not only an economic truth; but it is the deepest economic truth yet revealed to man. The ownership of God over the material wealth of the world is just as vital to true economics as the fatherhood of God to the spirits of men is to true theology; and neither our economics nor our theology will ever be complete until they incorporate both these parallel truths. This is the next step in Christian thought, and the next battle in the business world.

Back at the source is the place to start: there in the first days of the first church "not one of them said that aught of the things that he possessed was his own." It cannot be said too many times; this conviction was absolutely unanimous among the first Christians. It was the culmination of all the teachings of all the law-givers and prophets and teachers and priests of the Bible who lived before Jesus. It was the concentrated property teachings of Jesus himself broken at last into full blaze in the consciousness of all his Spirit-filled first disciples.

The earth is God's; he created it. The earth is God's; he preserves it. The earth is God's; for he claims it. The earth is God's; for all his creatures who ever dare to claim the smallest part of it are also his.

God's ownership of the earth is not mere theology nor pious poetry; it is economics, the dark, jagged bottom of all true economics. We have been theological believers of this truth and economic infidels of it. That's the reason our modern business seethes in covetousness and class conflict.

Nobody doubts that the ocean is God's, because man cannot station himself on it. But suppose a man should anchor a house-boat on the high seas, passing ships would steer around and the man would be in possession of part of the surface of the sea so long as his cable should hold. Imagine that many should do this; there might be after awhile anchored cities and gardens and farms on sea. Think of the ocean covered thus, except lanes for the steamers to pass. Would all this take the ocean away from God? Well, this is exactly what has happened on land. Is the land then taken away from God?

We have been reading the twenty-fourth Psalm, religiously accepting it and economically denying it. "The earth is the Lord's,"—yes, we all say, "Bless his holy name." But here is a shock for our complacent piety: everything in the earth is God's—"the fulness of it" is his. Another jar for our religious senses and economic interests—"the world" is God's; that is, the inhabited part of the earth¹: the part of the earth that has houses built on it is God's. We have been willing to turn over the Oceans, the Sahara Desert, and the North and South Poles to the undisputed ownership of God; but not the streets of our cities, nor the roads of our country, nor the land our stores and houses and banks and factories and farms occupy. We have never yet reflected in our economic thinking, that the dirt under the highest skyscraper built by man in New York City is just as much God Almighty's dirt as the dirt in the bottom of the deepest

¹Oikoumena, *Septuagint*.

deep in the Pacific Ocean is his. Wall Street and Lombard Street are God's. But that is not all yet: not only the inhabited earth is God's; but even the inhabitants of the earth are God's, too—the world and “they that dwell therein” are his.

But the truth of God's ownership is even clearer in the teachings of Christ himself: in the Rich Fool; in Dives and Lazarus; in thirteen out of twenty-nine parables; in his comparison of the eye of the needle and the camel for rich men trying to get into the kingdom of heaven; in his clear challenge, “Who-soever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple.” God's universal ownership is inherent in the very terms of the salvation of our souls; for we can not buy it, we have to take it as a free gift or not at all; and after we accept it, we are no longer even our own, we are bought with a price. Even our bodies become consciously God's: that all else is God's does not merely follow; it is an immediate intuition with the redeemed soul.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” If this prayer means anything, we are asking back from God as a gift from him that portion which we wish to use ourselves. Caesar will have our money, or God will have it; but in Christ's accountancy there is no third column for self.¹

Property ownership among men is first individual, then corporate; now it threatens to become national, just another word for socialism. When it becomes national, as it may do in Russia, and gets armed with guns, police forces, navies, armies, poison gas, etc., there will be a war that may practically exterminate all combatants.

Jesus Christ is not concerned about the development of a science or system of economics. He is concerned to get rooted in the hearts of men the spirit

¹P. H. Wilson.

of fraternal responsibility; an intuitive sense that God is Owner of all; that men are his stewards; a realization that the stewards are sons of the one great Owner and brothers to one another. This done, a transforming, enlarging, liberating, co-ordinating, guiding, inspiring energy is released among the economic forces of human life. Any economic science that ignores this energy will have to be revised; any economic program that leaves out this energy is heading society toward revolution; any economic order that shuts out this energy is doomed to dry-rot or explosion. A Christianity of short-circuited intensity is now smothered by a generally accepted non-religious economics. The modern world must be saved from a shallow infidel economism that in the name of science tries to expel God from economic thought and goes parading itself around in our schools and colleges and directors' meetings and business offices as scientific economics; blinding materialism,—soggy commercialism. The souls of men are being darkened and drowned in it.

Economia in a nutshell: (a) God the Father; redeemed men his sons; (b) God the Owner; redeemed men his stewards; (c) The stewards brothers in all their dealings with one another. This world is a vast vineyard let to husbandmen¹ by its Owner, God. Those who do not acknowledge the Owner's right will finally kill the Owner's Son, or sons. The basis of property in the Christian conception is sonship of God.²

Redeemed souls are to have control of things under the principle of stewardship.³ Things as well as souls are to be reconciled to God. Souls redeemed extending their powers outward over things around them in stewardship will do this. This is economia. God seeks

¹Luke 20: 9f.

²*Men and World Service*, p. 134.

³Col. 1: 15-23.

to control things as fast and as far as possible through his own free people, instead of controlling people through things.

We are "heirs of God." We have part in this world as well as in the next. This is the ground of the Christian's possession of wealth even in this life.¹ "The meek shall inherit the earth." What the true Christian now possesses of the earth, he possesses on exactly the same ground that he will possess some of heaven after awhile; his prayer is "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Our possessions do not rest upon the laws of the world, but upon the life of God. Some "count of us as if we walked after the flesh."² Our modern economics is thought out on the level of the flesh. It ignores or opposes the presence of the spiritual in human life. The need is an economics generally accepted among men which gives the spiritual its place in the production and exchange of material goods.

Material possession should be a means to fellowship among people, and not a bar to it. "Whoso hath the world's goods and beholdeth his brother in need and shutteth his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" The whole matter is, even in the use of property, God is still our Father and we are still brothers. Stewardship of property is the business side of sonship to God, the business side of brotherhood among men. No man can be a steward of God, therefore, with an unforgiven brother.³

One holds property till a stronger and wiser takes it from him; another, till a weaker and more ignorant needs it.⁴

"I hate God. He makes the wind blow and I haven't any warm clothes—He makes it snow, and my shoes

¹Gal. 4: 6, 7.

²Cor. 10: 2.

³Matt. 18: 23-35.

⁴C. H. Parkhurst.

have holes in them—He makes it cold, and we haven't any fire at home—He makes me hungry and we haven't any bread for breakfast—O, I hate God." This is the human cry of economic despair. It is the infidelity of socialism. Its one answer, its only cure is the development of the economic phase of original Christianity.

Now right here we come to the pivot of this whole volume; it is the fundamental question:

2. *Can God's Ownership of All Property, the Nethermost Economic Truth of God's Kingdom and of Man's Society, Be Realized in Christian Experience?*

"Yes" or "No" to this question is the supreme issue of our age. "No" in answer to this question hopelessly separates Christianity and Economics, or else throws them into violent hostility. But with "Yes" for the answer to this question, vital Christianity can invade the whole mechanism of economics, illuminate it with the sense of God's presence, lubricate it with the love of God in men for one another, and make it the servant instead of the master of mankind.

When Christians surrender the vital truth of God's ownership of the earth—all property—they have only two alternatives left; one is to set men on, like dogs, to tear it up among themselves and then join with them in the scramble for a part of it; the other is to acknowledge that it is all the devil's already anyhow and then give it up to him without protest and sit down in pious meditation about the next world. Christians have been doing both these things. Man is to subdue the earth; the trouble is, he is trying to own it. That's what lets the devil loose.

In our thinking we have separated the spiritual and the material as belonging to different worlds. So we have tried to shut material things out of spiritual experience. Result: our experiences of God have been emotionalistic, kindled to sudden intensity and

soon burnt out, divine electricity with no earthly wires; our material goods have no spiritual significance with us and are put to uses that leave God out of count and plunge our souls into disintegrating materialism.

No property can exist without a possessor; without a possessor, it would be, not property, but waste; there can be no possessor without a person; there can be no person without the possibility of the experience of a personal God; so property is inevitably involved in Christian experience. Or to state it from the other side: there can be no Christian experience of God without a person to experience it; no person can live in this world as a normal, mature human being without possessing something; anything possessed is property. So from the soul's highest experience of God down to the lowest consideration of property there is a taut chain of cause and effect; to touch either end of the chain sends a vibration through its whole length. So the question of property cannot be torn away from Christian experience. Property may be a material thing; but the possession of it by a human being is always a fact of deep spiritual significance; a point of contact for each soul, either with God or with Satan. This is the psychology and the religion of property; it was illuminated by the Holy Spirit in the first church; it became the experience of the whole church, the economic effect of God in the souls of men.

We have been assuming that economic truths can not be religiously experienced, that an economic truth once felt in the soul immediately loses its economic significance and becomes mere religion. But lo! a little study of the first years of Christianity shows us that the bottom truths of all property, the Father's ownership of it, his children's stewardship of it, and the brotherhood of the stewards of it, burst out in actual Christian experience and overflowed into an economic expression that met the temporary needs

of a local situation. No man can harbor in his soul the delusion that he actually owns anything and remain in fellowship with God and with God's children.

For ownership, except it be joint ownership, is an outright denial of fellowship. Fellowship and stewardship go together. In the first church, when the multitude of believers were of "one heart and soul" right then "not one of them said that he owned anything." So much akin are stewardship and fellowship that the little teaching of stewardship we have recently had in our churches is already answered in the business world by the organization of fellowship clubs like the Rotarians, the Civitans, the Kiwanians, etc.

Fellowship is spiritual, but it cannot avoid sharing material things. Christianity would push spiritual fellowship down among material things; communism would lift material arrangements above the souls of men. Thomas A. Kempis says, "He who seeks his own loses the things in common." What we need is "fewer goods and more good." The trouble with the prodigal son was, he wanted to "own" his portion apart from his father and his brother.

The teaching of Christian stewardship apart from the realization in Christian experience of God's ownership of property is a broken bone. It is not food; it is carrion to the souls of men; no flesh nor marrow in it. But keep the Christian stewardship of material goods articulated with the original Christian experience that made the first church a united body in regarding themselves as merely the possessors, and not the owners of property, and at once the principles of stewardship become the living bones of a living church pulsating with the red blood of the slain Christ. Thus the Christian stewardship of wealth, both of accumulated capital and of productive energy, becomes a vital message of the churches; it is kept warm by the same fires of the Spirit that keep evangelization aglow.

If the full gospel of Christ is preached, setting forth God as both the Father of all Christians and the Owner of all property, the stewardship of property becoming a live truth in the soul of every young convert, will break out from every real Christian church in swelling tides of economic impulse ultimately saturating the whole business world with a sense of God's right to his own. Then, wrought by the Holy Spirit into the souls of God's people as a part of their very experience of God, Christian stewardship of wealth will propagate itself so generally, so vigorously, so vitally as to Christianize economies.

What we need is "a Christianity able to vitalize economic righteousness."¹ A necessity to the world now is a convincing economic testimony to the power of Christ over the souls of men. Stewardship of property vitalized in the souls of Christians, practicalized in their training, and applied in their business activity will make Christ supreme in the modern world.

Of course, the Christian should at least tithe his income. But to insist on tithing as a legal obligation for the Christian imperils the freedom of his soul; it ignores its experience. Only truth actually experienced counts in a real spiritual democracy. The Christian economic experience runs deeper than the law of the tithe. It is not an outer law; it is an inner impulse. It does not bind the Christian; it sets him free to live out the deepest in him. It is of grace which binds the heart instead of the hands and feet of a man. The Christian acknowledges God's ownership of what he possesses with a regular proportionate part of the income from it, not because the law requires it, but because his own life requires it. Not to do so, he is denying an experience of his own soul; lying to God in his own consciousness as Ananias did.

¹H. C. King.

All we need is an experience that makes God and the souls of men more real to us than money and stocks and bonds and lands and houses and cattle. Property comes under the sway of the soul's experience of God when we find out in the Spirit that God is real and mighty and loving, and closer to us than anything that we call ours; our property then becomes a part of our personality and is included in the atonement itself.

"There is no room for Jew or Greek, there is no room for slave or freeman, there is no room for male or female: you are all one in Christ."¹ Then of course, among genuine Christians the external, accidental, temporary, apparent distinctions based on the incident of material possessions disappears. It is as impossible for human beings to come into touch with the original power of Christianity without this result, as it would be to keep a block of ice unmelted in the glow of a tropical sun.

That God's ownership of property is a truth susceptible of spiritual experience is the deepest economic essential of Christian democracy. The sole hope of ultimate economic harmony on earth among men and nations and races of men hangs to the fact that the experience of God's ownership of property is in reach of the common unofficial man everywhere the pure gospel is preached. It is not a mere abstraction confined to philosophers; it is not a secret in a circle of trained economists. It is a simple truth immediately patent to every redeemed soul; it is an awakened sense in every regenerated man. It does not come into men's brains by slow education; it blazes out in their hearts in instantaneous experience that can be no more denied than God can be ignored. It grips the simple-minded. It is to become universal among

¹Gal. 3: 28, Moffatt.

God's people and will finally dethrone the possessive instinct as the controlling motive in business.

We were passing through a river valley. In the middle of it stood a giant oak with a notch cut high in its trunk. "That," said my friend, "is the high-water mark of the flood in this river in the year nineteen sixteen." I asked, "Will the water in this river ever rise to that level again?" "I hope not," answered my friend. Well, it will rise that high again just as sure as the sun keeps on shining; just as sure as the clouds keep on moving; and just as sure as the ocean does not dry up. Now, the unanimous conviction of God's ownership of property in the Jerusalem First Church is the economic high-water mark of Christian experience.

Will it ever rise to that level in Christendom again? Yes! Yes!—Just as sure as human hearts continue to yearn after God; just as sure as the Holy Spirit of God continues to work in the world; just as sure as Jesus Christ stays risen from the dead. When the churches are lifted to this level again, we shall be in the midst of a revival that meets the needs of the modern world. Nothing less will save it, tangled up as it is economically.

The experience of God's ownership of us and of all ours comes to souls in various ways.

3. *Here is a Simple Incident that Revolutionized the Work of a Minister in Middle Life.* Let him tell it to you by the fire where he was sitting when it occurred:

I sat musing before the open fire. With eyes shut, trying to see deep into things, I held the poker in my hand. I let the other end of the poker rest on the floor: then with my eyes still shut tight I knew the other end of the poker was on the carpet. Then I moved the poker just a little; and still without seeing, I knew the other end of it was on the brick of the hearth. I asked myself, "How do I know whether

it is carpet or brick at the other end of the poker with my eyes closed?" Then to answer the question I got off into physiology, neurology, psychology and several other sciences which men call with big names to cover their ignorance of the facts of life, and I found no satisfactory answer to my question. Then I put my question to my own sensations; the sane answer came simple, direct, self-evident: "I know it is brick at the other end of the poker, because I feel the brick with the poker; I feel the carpet with the poker."

Now came the question that opened up a new world to me: "If I *feel* the brick and the carpet with the other end of the poker, then how far do *I* go down the poker? Do *I* stop where my hands take hold of the poker, or do *I* go down through the poker clear to the other end of it?"

Like a flash it dawned upon me that I go personally to the other end and to the further side of every thing that is under my control. In the light of that simple realization all the teaching and preaching of the gospel of Jesus I had ever done were suddenly condemned as utterly superficial and inadequate. For I had never concerned myself about people further than out to where they take hold of things around them.

If I stood here with a field glass and shot off the nose of a judge presiding over court in an adjoining county, they would get me for contempt of court, or something worse, just as surely as if I walked bodily into the court room and broke the judge's nose with my fist. That is already the law of the land; we must establish this same principle in religion. It applies to all use of material things. It applies to "a cocoanut or a continent," if a Christian possesses either of them. If I had a planet in my power so that I could flip it out of its orbit, and then if I did so and wrecked a world, I would be as much responsible

for the ruin of the other world as if I had beaten that world into pieces with a pair of brass-knucks. Whether it is pennies or planets in my hands, I am as much responsible for what I can do with them as I am for what I can do with my own fingernails, so long as there is a God above me greater than I am.

That moment, as I thought on these things, there surged through my soul a religious emotion that I had never felt before. I really saw for myself for the first time that a man's personality permeates, in spite of himself, all that he possesses or controls of things. A man cannot give his soul to God without giving his body; nor can he give his body without giving all that his body controls. Instantly a new conviction was born in me that made me utterly unafraid of the material arrangements of our modern civilization and made me ready to defy them, if need be, in the testimony to a fresh sense of God. I know it now; in that simple experience, I was in the gray dawn of the revival now impending in Christendom.

This is the economic phase of Christian experience; in one word, *Economia*. When it really goes generally into the teaching and preaching of our Christian churches, a new age will be born among men. The birth-pangs of it are already upon the world.

CHAPTER III

AN UNDEVELOPED PHASE OF CHRISTIANITY



THE gospel is many-sided. In its development so far it has displayed multitudinous phases. It has in store many surprises for the future. Among its various aspects, there is none more interesting, or more commanding, or more significant than—

I. ITS ECONOMIC PHASE.

Christianity is God saving man for this world and for the world to come. The whole nature of men, their relations to one another, and their relations to this world are all involved in this process. So at once it follows that Christianity is the most multi-form life on earth. It can not escape entanglement with the economic interests of men. For in it,

1. God is Saving Men and Women Who Are Free Living Units in an Economic Order.

Men, in giving themselves to God in this salvation, do not efface their economic relations to other men or to the material world in which they live. After they are saved they still remain for years in this economic order as animate parts of it. It is as breathing links in this economic chain which binds men together that Christians grow in grace. The conscience and the stomach of a Christian can not be torn apart while he still lives on this earth. Saved souls during their sojourn here dwell in physical bodies with heads to be sheltered, with backs to be clothed and with mouths to be fed; they are still economic beings. This fact is sure basis for the hope that the gospel of Christ will yet renovate the world economically.

Whether there be any economic order of any kind in heaven, we know not; but we do know that the Christian life is mantled in economic interests on earth until our dead bodies are disposed of. The gospel can no more save men and escape contact with economics than a net can catch fish without getting soaked in water; than a seed can sprout and grow and fruit without getting covered up in soil. So inevitably, Christianity has its economic aspects.

Not only is Christianity saving men and women who are economically related, but it is also part of the task of Christianity to

2. Renovate the Economic Order in Which Christians Live While on Earth.

The gospel saves souls for the next world; but it saves them in this world. And through souls saved in this world it is destined to save this world itself. This world in all its complexity and conflicting interests is to be purged of sin and selfishness. A regenerated society is to be set up in it in which God's will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven; in which the knowledge of God's glory is to cover all the antagonisms of earth like the ocean covers its submerged mountains; in which the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ; a new earth as well as a new heaven is on the way. God pledges all this to us in the New Testament. The whole lump is to be leavened.

This program Christianity can never carry out unless it touches and transforms the economic system in which people live and deal with one another. A conquering Christianity cannot keep itself out of the economic struggle among men so long as Christians have to work and pray for their daily bread.

If Christianity were non-economic in its nature, or even anti-economic in its aims, there would still be an economic phase in its activities, so long as it reaches

after souls living in bodies economically dependent upon any kind of economic arrangement for the necessities of life. But Christianity, instead of being anti-economic, or even non-economic, must become the most potent economic force ever released in the lives of men, or else fail to establish the reign of Christ on earth; for it is committed to setting up God as Father in the hearts of men and making men aware they are brothers among themselves in the midst of a world of trade and traffic now dominated by the right of the strong, the ethics of the jungle. So Christianity has two alternatives now; it must be the dominating economic force in civilization, or a religious failure. Let us face the challenge.

In saving men and women,

3. Christianity Itself is Economically Dependent While it is at Work Among Men.

Its work must be financed. Christianity cannot be bought; but the expenses of its operations must be paid. For instance, a man could not hire a true woman to marry him; yet he could not marry her without entailing expense that may run long after he is dead, to the thousandth generation; love is free; but marriage is very costly, as some married people know. Mother charges nothing for her service in the household, would be heart-broken if you offered to pay her for it; yet while she lives out her love to her loved ones she has stronger rights to clothes and food and shelter than any hireling; even mother cannot escape being an economic asset and a part of the economic burden in the family.

So Christianity, setting forth the more than mother-love of God, cannot do its work in human life without becoming an economic responsibility among those who live out its spirit and principles and support its work. This makes unavoidable an economic phase of Christian activity.

But Christianity is certain of becoming the central economic factor in the affairs of mankind, for

4. In the Very Experience by Which Men Become Christians There is a Basal Economic Impulse.

It is an illuminated sense that the same God is the Father of our souls and the Owner of all material things around us. This is what the first Christians experienced and expressed in their use of property. We can no more separate in ourselves the redeemed soul and the possessor of property than we can rend apart on high God the Father of souls and God the Owner of the earth, of all things economic. Thus the economic phase of vital Christianity is embedded in the first consciousness of God on the part of every child of God. That's what happened in the first church, exactly, unanimously.

This experience impels every redeemed soul to revise his estimate of economic values and to put to highest use every material good. Ever afterwards, with the Son of God dwelling in us through the Holy Spirit, God the Father is always above us, and God the Owner is always around us. Therefore, every Christian must deny part of his own experience, or else confront God in every economic interest that touches his life.

There is nothing so needed now as the rediscovery of the significant fact that the economic phase of Christian experience stood out in challenging, bold relief in the first church at Jerusalem. The early Christians came into a soul-unity with God and with one another that made economic things the means of life and not the end of life. Nowhere else among the New Testament churches did the economic interests become so secondary and so subservient to the awakened sense of the rights of God and of the souls of men over material things; yet everywhere in all the churches of the New Testament, this phase of

Christian experience and impulse shone out in the offerings of Christians for the poor at Jerusalem; and to this day, wherever the genuine gospel of Jesus is preached, men are instantaneously roused from within to share with one another material goods as well as spiritual good.

When we reflect that Christianity is saving men and women who live in some kind of economic order, that Christianity is charged with the task of illuminating and renovating our whole economic order, that Christianity in its work among men must have economic support, and that the bottom economic truths of the universe emerge in Christian experience, namely, God's ownership and man's stewardship of wealth, we cannot rid ourselves of the conviction that the economic phase is always present in vital Christianity. Yet this is still—

II. AN UNDEVELOPED PHASE

of Christianity. It towered into significance in the first days of the first church; then it subsided in that church, and never rose to such heights in any other church of the New Testament. But the impulse which precipitated such an overwhelming economic expression of Christian experience in Jerusalem was present in fainter form in all the first churches of Jesus Christ, and with varying expressions still shows itself to-day in every group where the real Spirit of Christ dwells.

But this economic phase of earliest Christianity, always present though repressed in the impulses of genuine Christianity, is still undeveloped.

An undeveloped phase of a thing is a future stage of its growth; an aspect of its life that is to appear in its unfolding. Silk and tassel are undeveloped phases of sprouting corn. A flowing mustache is an

undeveloped phase of the upper lip of a fourteen-year-old boy. The midnight crowing of a cock a year hence may be an undeveloped phase of this egg lying silent and warm here under the bosom of the setting hen. A tree with birds in its boughs and cattle in its shade is an undeveloped phase of a germinating mustard seed.¹ The corn, the boy, the egg, the seed are all alive and developing; phases will follow one another in their growth.

Christianity is not a finished, fixed, dead thing. It is the highest, deepest, largest life in humanity. Jesus described the kingdom of heaven in terms of growth; a mustard seed becoming a great tree; leaven spreading through the whole meal. In the gospel a babe becomes the Lord of heaven and earth. Springs of the knowledge of God, breaking out here and there in the hearts of lonely men, are to flow together until one vast ocean of the knowledge of God submerges the whole earth. In all our imagined Christian progress, we have so far had only the beginnings of Christianity; and in much of our religious activity we are not in touch with even the beginnings of it.

The kingdom of God unfolding itself on earth is constantly to break forth in wonderful surprises for men. Much of it already among us has not yet appeared to us. Much of it is in hibernation, so to speak, awaiting the returns of God's summers to stir forth into view. In the unrolling of human history, Christianity is to round itself out into a full development of all the phases of its inherent life. The Holy Spirit, like a dove broods in the churches.²

In the first nesting place of Christianity, the Jerusalem church, lying there among the general principles of the new age to come in the world was one particular egg, hatched out in a local temporary

¹Matt. 13: 31f.

²Rev. 2: 7, repeated seven times in Jesus' last message to the churches.

situation just far enough to show its nature and to get established for all time its right to be hatched out any time in any true church of Christ; but never yet full grown anywhere, still waiting in embryonic state in the churches for general conditions in which to mature. History has its hatching hours; the Spirit of God broods all the time.

The story of a kernel of wheat kept for a thousand years in the dry hand of an Egyptian mummy and then falling into moist soil and growing in a few seasons into a crop of wheat has gone the rounds recently. Maybe very few believe this. Yet it is true to the ways of life. Billions upon billions of God's seeds are kept wrapped in dry shucks and hulls through every winter, ready to sprout at the first breath of spring.

In the true and hitherto uninteresting record of Acts, fourth and fifth chapters, God with whom a thousand years is as one day, has kept stored away through a winter long to us but short to him, till our own times, the germinal impulse of a new economic order among men, the economic phase of original Christianity.

III. WHY IS THIS PHASE STILL UNDEVELOPED?

This phase of Christianity is still undeveloped because it has been neglected all through the ages. Makeshifts, tricks, subterfuges, and methods foreign to Christian experience have been used to finance Christian work. Christian organizations have depended upon everything but Christianity itself for the economic support of their work. Strange to say, in all the centuries of the Christian era, Christians have steadily overlooked the fact that there is released in Christian experience an economic force that will finance Christian work, if it is only given a chance to function in Christian life.

In the early decades and in recent times Christianity has supported itself financially; but in all the ages between, it has depended economically upon the taxing power of a centralized ecclesiasticism and of civil government, upon fees and indulgences, upon grants and endowments, upon fairs and feasts and entertainments, upon even gambling tricks at times, to pay its expenses. It should go without saying, a Christianity that has not the economic vitality to support its own work cannot have the spiritual power to permeate all other kinds of work in the economic order with the spirit and teachings of Jesus.

Not only has the economic phase of Christian life been almost atrophied by chronic neglect, but it has been all but crushed by a series of conditions in Christian history that were hostile to its development. Much potential in Christianity is yet to become actual. In this living acorn there are potentially millions of oak leaves, but all stay dormant inside the acorn hull in Arctic cold or Sahara dryness. They are waiting for warmth and moisture. So the economic truths in original Christianity are still undeveloped, because the conditions in the churches and in the world around the churches have kept them back. But just as sure as the life of the oak in the acorn hull will in due time produce crops of leaves year after year, just so sure the truth of God in the record of the first church and in the life of all real churches will bring forth in due time full economic evidences of faith in God as the Owner of all property and of love for the souls of men as sons of God.

But this, of which there was an earnest in the first church, has not yet happened. In two thousand years of Christian history it has never had a chance to happen on a general scale. All the time there has been a condition in the churches or around them that forbade the development of this impulse inherent in

Christianity. Since the first days of the first church there have been at least four conditions, changing from time to time, which prevented the liberation of the economic impulses of vital Christianity; and all the time one or more of these conditions have served as economic shackles to Christian experience. We now name these four conditions which have unremittingly hindered the development of the economic phase of Christianity;—

In New Testament times, the economic phase of Christianity could not fully nor generally develop; it was retarded then by the concentration of the effort of Christians in—

1. *The Contest With Both Judaism and Paganism.* The first struggle of Christianity was to establish itself in Judaism; the second struggle was to win its way into Paganism. The storm centre of the first struggle was Jerusalem, the storm centre of the second was Antioch. Both these struggles were fierce; and both of them coming upon the Christians at the same time, the battle was doubly fierce. There was no time to give attention to other matters than the initiation of elementary Christianity: it had to gain a religious standing within Judaism and to maintain its intellectual integrity against Paganism. It was a battle for the life of Christianity itself in its very youth; and the economic consequences of Christian experience were simply recorded for development in a later day.

The contest with Judaism began the day that Jesus drove the money changers from the Temple. The city of Jerusalem was economically supported by the revenues of the temple, the priests, the priests' servants, the Levites, the money changers, the sellers of animals for the altar, and hangers-on to the temple business by the thousands made up largely the population of the city, and they nearly all lived out of the temple

revenue directly or indirectly. The early Christians were cut off from the temple supplies; that is the explanation of the deep poverty of the first Christian church. Judaism slew Jesus. It imprisoned Peter and James and John and others for preaching Jesus. It killed Stephen. It drove the Christians out of Jerusalem. It embroiled Christians in the bitter controversy on circumcision. It hounded Paul all the way to Rome. In these trying times there was no chance for thought on the economics of Christianity.

The strife with Paganism was even more sore. The first mutterings of it are heard in the missionary journeys of Paul at Philippi where the masters of the sooth-saying maid rise in rage because her healing spoils their game of gain, in Ephesus where Demetrius the silversmith is aroused at the hurt of his traffic in the images of Diana, in Corinth where, in a Christian church, the Christian life shines out in condemning contrast with its Pagan surroundings.

The conflict of Christianity with Paganism was an intellectual battle; Paganism at Alexandria was built into logical systems; the brightest minds of the Greek race made their contributions to it. In the encounter with Pagan philosophies, the intensest thinking of master Christian minds was absorbed. Even at that Christianity has not yet won a clear victory; for traces of Paganism survive to our own day in the names of the days of our week, in the attempt at a Christian adaptation of Easter, in the reign of Mammon in the business world of Christendom.

But the acute stage of the Christian battle with Paganism was reached when it became political. Paganism sought to use the power of the Roman Empire to exterminate Christianity. Under its sway Rome tried to terrorize the Christians. It fed them to lion and flame. Still Christians multiplied. It was in these grievous times that the Apocalypse, the last

book of the New Testament, was written; it bears the singe of the fires. These persecutions raged for nearly three centuries, until Constantine.

While Christians were engaged with all thought and energy and life in this double battle with Judaism on one hand and with Paganism on the other hand, there is no wonder that the economics of Christianity received little or no attention, especially in an age when the human mind had not become constructively interested in economics anyway.

So throughout New Testament times and for a while afterwards, the economic phase of Christian experience lay dormant in Christian activity.

In the days of the early fathers and for a long period following them, the economic phase of Christianity was not developed; it was thwarted then by Christian education getting side-tracked into

2. *The Error of Poverty.*

Poverty, chastity, obedience, these were the three great vows of Monasticism. Poverty was the first of these vows. Renunciation of property was made the first condition of admission into the monastic schools; voluntary poverty was at the base of the early Christian culture; penury became central in the early system of Christian education. Benedict, in retreat from the world at the deserted palace of Nero in a gorge of the Arve, housed in an inaccessible cave, is typical of the best Christianity of the fifth century, taking refuge in poverty.

We are not to be too harsh with the early Christian fathers for insisting that poverty was necessary to the highest Christian living in the conditions of their times. They were sincerely trying to follow the teachings and the spirit of Jesus in a society sodden in sin and in selfish misuse of property. They were living too close to the time of Jesus Christ to forget that

he taught that riches made entrance into the kingdom of heaven impossible¹, that those who do not renounce what they have as the measure of their lives cannot learn the first lessons of the kingdom.² They had record true and tradition fresh of the unanimous conviction of conscious poverty Godward in the first of Christ's churches, "not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own."

Everywhere in Roman society they were against the Pagan lie of man's ownership of property in which men were putrefying, some in godless material luxury, but most of them in dire want of the necessities of life. Thoughtful Christians under this condition of Roman society rebounded from this lie of man's ownership of property. They went off in search of an alternative to ownership; they found it in poverty as the ideal of the Christian life.

In the question of man's relation to property, there are just three choices: (1) ownership, (2) poverty, (3) stewardship. Rebounding from the first of these, early Christian thought seized the second. To this day, the third, the only true one, is still untried, except in spots.

The contrast between poverty and stewardship is antipodal. One is negative; the other is positive. Voluntary poverty says, "For God's sake, I'll have nothing." Stewardship says, "I'll have all that I can put to God's uses." Poverty says, "I throw away all that makes me unhappy." Stewardship says, "I take up all that will make me useful." Poverty meditates in solitude. Stewardship serves in society. Poverty assumes that property belongs to the devil. Stewardship knows that property belongs to God.

¹Matt. 19: 24.

²Luke 14: 33.

So the early fathers chose poverty, the wrong alternative to ownership. They forgot that the heavenly Father is the owner of all property.

But there is no use to speculate about this; for Stewardship, which is just another word for economics in the Christian life, could not be developed *in the Middle Ages*, because there stood in the way of it.

3. *An Autocratic Government*

of the Christian churches centralized in the Roman Catholic Church.

So long as there is any kind of autocratic power on earth in control of Christian churches, there can be no outlet for an experience like that which broke out in the first of the churches. True Christianity is personal and voluntary; not systematic, not institutional. Autocracy stifles the development of the economic phase of free Christianity; for under any form of autocracy this phase of the Christian life cannot be developed without economically strengthening the autocracy. If stewardship of property, the economic phase of Christianity, had been fully developed in the monastic schools of the first five centuries, the autocratic power of the Roman Empire moving its seat into the Roman Catholic Church, the emperor becoming the pope, with its fabulous economic resources thus gained, would likely have gotten absolute control of the white races of man; and the Roman empire would have become long-lived and fossilized like the Chinese empire. God be praised! We were saved from this, even if it were through the error of the early Christian fathers in turning to poverty instead of Stewardship in their reaction from the Pagan property ownership of Roman law.

There can never be a full development of the economic phase of Christianity apart from democracy. Otherwise Christianity would enslave men, instead of setting them free. The economic resources of Chris-

tendom, in any ecclesiastical or autocratic form of church government, are in constant peril of going under the control of a man or set of men; then the more they are increased, the greater the power of that man or that set of men over the consciences of Christians. But with a democratic interpretation of the Christ, where every soul and every local church is free and directly accessible to God's Spirit, there cannot be a wholesale misuse of the economic resources of God's people.

A religious autocracy is the most blighting of all autocracies: it comes between the soul and God. *Oikonomia*, *economia*, the economics of Christian experience, in short, stewardship of wealth, is devitalized among Christians the moment any intermediary separates the soul from God. This is one of Almighty God's brakes when Christianity starts down hill into ecclesiasticism. With any form of autocracy in charge of the Christian program, the sources of the economic power of the gospel are dammed up in the very hearts of freemen, and Christian benevolence becomes a system of taxation merely. For over twelve hundred years, from Constantine to Luther, the autocratic power of the Roman see hedged off any general development of the economic phase of vital Christianity.

Ecclesiastical power could never develop the economic potentiality of God's presence in the lives of men, for that would have brought a coalition of ecclesiastical power and of economic power in human affairs, the most desperate despotism possible among men. God has saved us from it by delaying the development of the economic phase of the gospel.

But was not the backbone of the Roman autocracy over Christians broken in the Protestant Reformation? Yes; never again will the Roman Catholic Church be the world idea of the common man as it

was in the middle centuries; henceforth it has to hold precariously to its power in spots by political manipulations with governments of different nations. Then if Rome's power over Christendom was wrecked in the Protestant Reformation, *why did not the economic phase of Christianity begin to develop at the close of the Reformation?*

Just simply because in each Protestant country the Roman Catholic Church was succeeded by a

4. *State Church.*

A state church cannot develop the economic side of Christianity; instead, it cuts it off. Any program for the development of the economic phase of Christianity worked out under a state church would become at once a scheme of taxation. A state church cannot save itself from politics and politicians; can not think downward to the economic truth that God owns all property, nor outward into the social truth of man's stewardship of property; these are not matters of political astuteness in a state church, but of simple Christian experience in a free church. A state church does not know what to do with a spiritual truth but to try to enact it into law in a parliament, turn it over to a policeman with a club and try it out in a courthouse. This process, carried fully out, would degrade the experience of the first church into a form of state socialism.

The state protects us in the right of possessing property; the church teaches us and inspires us to do our duty as stewards of God in the use of our possessions. If the church should emphasize the possession of property as the end of life, our whole civilization would soon be delivered over to materialism; if the state should enforce the stewardship of property, we should slide instantly into socialism. Here is an unexplored field in which the whole matter of church and state is to come into review again. Possession

of property without restraining sense of stewardship is dangerous, and stewardship of property without guarded right of possession is helpless. So possession and stewardship run together. One is law; the other is grace. One is the concern of the state: the other is the concern of the church. Nowhere is connection of church and state more fatal than right here in these economic matters. Nowhere in our modern life is there such deep necessity for a clear, wide separation of church and state as in matters of property. The state church both religiously and politically ignored all these fundamental principles; wherever a state church was in control of affairs, there could be no healthy development of the economic phase of Christianity: that is, the stewardship of property among Christians had to be neglected.

But the day of the state church is now over. It is doomed everywhere. For instance, England has her state church; for over three hundred years she has planted her colonies all over the world, but nowhere at all has she been able to transplant her state church.¹ The spirit of the age is overwhelmingly against the state church. France has abolished it. Italy, the homeland of Roman Catholicism, is committed against it. Ireland could not settle her difficulties with England without allowing at least full toleration. Even in England itself there is agitation for self-disestablishment of the state church. And there has now risen in America the strongest government on earth fixed from its beginning against any form of state church.

Christianity, repressed in its economic development in New Testament times by its bitter struggle with Judaism and with Paganism, in the days of the early fathers by the incorporation of the vow of property into monastic education, in the Middle Ages by the

¹Stead's *Americanization of the World*.

rise of the autocratic power of the Roman pope over the churches, in modern times by the presence of state churches in Protestant countries, is at last free to return to its original economic impulse and develop it into world-wide force. It has taken a long time to get to this; we have had to run around a two-thousand year circle to come to it. But the time is not lost; God never hurries. Now the whole field is clear for a

IV. FULL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECONOMIC PHASE

of the true Christianity of the first days of the first church. This development is starting by a return to original Christian experience. It is destined to be the great outstanding event of our times. The Crusades or the Protestant Reformation did not mean more to the times following them than this economic development of vital Christianity is to mean to the times to come after us.

As *economia*, Christian economics, New Testament stewardship of property, is developed, all bodies of Christians are going to be blessed with it. It is going to increase their resources for Christian work, whatever form of church government they may have, whether they are governed by pope, college of bishops, general assembly, mass-meeting or what-not. The point is, the original *economia* of Christ's teachings and of Christian experience cannot be fully restored nor freely developed in any group of local churches politically, or oligarchically, or autocratically governed from the outside. *Economia* among the free souls of Christian men and women is the economic side of Christian democracy. It is alien to centralized rule of any kind among Christian churches.

It has to grow in the open air. It is no house plant. Acorns will sprout in flower-boxes; but they will not mature there. Cedars of Lebanon cannot

be trained into steel-wire trellises: they either die or burst the trellis. *Economia*, the original economic experience of Christians, cannot be totally absorbed into the financial schemes of any denominational government; the Rocky Mountains cannot be reduced to uniformity.

Out into the open fields then with *economia*. Plant it deep; let its roots run down to the deepest soil of Christian experience. Let its trunk and limbs have the rim of the earth and the top of the skies for growing room. Its bounds are the Great Commission of Jesus, the possibilities of world democracy, and the eternal reign of Christ on earth and in heaven.

America the Starting Place for this Momentous Development. Here we have never had the first three hindrances to it; and the fourth hindrance to it, a state church, has been out of the way longer here than anywhere else in Christendom. Besides, here in America, our boundless raw material, our limitless store of power in coal and oil and waterfalls and the almost magic use of machinery have accelerated the creation of wealth to such an extent that the right use of it is a supreme Christian obligation, and the wrong use of it a supreme social economic peril. Our American civilization threatens to rot in materialistic luxury, if the economic significance of original Christianity is not rediscovered and wrought into the warp and woof of our industry and commerce. This is a challenging task; but it is worthwhile; it will save our nation and make North America the Christian stewardship nation.

In preparation for this start in America, we have had over a hundred years of freedom from all the conditions that have, one after another, forbidden the economic development of Christianity in all the rest of the world throughout the Christian era. Is not American Christianity making a very slow progress

in starting the development of the economics of early Christian experience? No; for we are just now finding out that Christianity and economics belong in the same world, and that therefore Christianity has its economic phase. Besides, the economic development of Christianity requires such careful reaching back into the long-covered-up experiences of the first Christians, and involves a movement of such magnitude in our present world that it has to come slowly. Like all movements with universal sweep, it takes its time and seems to come slowly of itself.

But with all this inevitable slowness, wonderful progress has been made. First of all, Christianity in America, without endowment or state subsidy, universally depends upon the voluntary economic support of Christians, and is better supported than anywhere else in the world. This fact has become so common to us that we never think of it; yet it marks a return of our Christianity to the original and is the beginning of a realization of the economic force of Christian experience and training. Not only this, but the voluntary economic support of Christian work has recently become mass-movements among American Christians in campaigns like the New Era among Presbyterians, the Centennial among Methodists, the 75 Million among Baptists, each of these raising millions of dollars for enlarged work. These are new phenomena in modern Christendom. Yet they are only vague expressions on large scale of an impulse that reigned in the first church. In these large campaigns, the primal economic impulse of Christianity has been modernized in organizations that cover large territories and applied, not as originally in meeting a local situation, but in meeting a vast world situation. The Christian stewardship of wealth is beginning to sound forth in compelling tones from the pulpit as never before; it is pouring forth in swelling

streams from the press. Many textbooks are being taught on the subject in our churches. This significant development is already well begun in wide scope.

This economic development of Christianity is a revival of the sense of God the Father and Owner in the souls of men; a return to the fountains of power; a reinterpretation and enlarged application of Christianity. In the Crusades, Christianity poured its motive power into the military operations of men and produced a new type of soldier and adventurer that did much to bring on the Renaissance. In the Protestant Reformation, Christianity entered the intellectual pursuits of men set free by the Renaissance and produced a new type of scholar and creeds that rebounded politically on all human government. In the settlement of America, Christian democracy took political form and produced statesmen and a government that guaranteed religious liberty.

In the economic development of original Christian impulse as to property, Christianity is now flowing outward over the economic world and is producing a new type of business man, and financial support for a real Christian world program. The Crusades, the Protestant Reformation, the settlement of America are all successive stages in the development of Christianity, as the universal religion of mankind; they are stair-steps upward toward the present development of the economic phase of Christianity.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEXT GREAT REVIVAL



WE have seen clearly that among the first Christians the experience of God reached down to the foundation of economics. It touched the matter of clothes, shelter, food. The spiritual took sway over the material in the lives of those who were the first to know God in Christ Jesus. They felt that the earth is at least one of the mansions of God's house. They knew they were in charge of part of God's house where they lived together as God's children. Therefore they recognized themselves as stewards of God for their brethren in all their possessions. With them cold economics had become a glowing *economia*.

Any form of Christianity which fails to kindle these convictions in people falls short of the original, is certainly partial, and may be counterfeit. What we need is a revival of God in human life that makes men brothers in their deeper and stronger feelings; that makes stewardship instead of ownership the economic aspiration; that lifts service above possession in economic motive; that supplants conflict with co-operation in economic activity; that utilizes educational processes in projecting vitalized stewardship into the world's work.

The supreme need of our modern times is to get our Christianity so revitalized that it will grip the economic world with the teachings of the Bible and of Jesus. Without it, our civilization collapses; the Christian program for the world is either pauperized or commercialized; and covetousness eats out the lives of our churches. To meet this situation there

must be a revival of religion, a reinterpretation and a re-application of Christianity; the original power of Christianity and the economic phases of original experience must both be brought into play and given room in our times. This can not be done without a revival greater than any known by Christians since the days of the apostles; a revival greater and more far-reaching than either the Crusades or the Protestant Reformation.

Such a revival must come; or else our diluted, modern Christianity in retreat from the economic and political struggles of men and corporations and parties and nations will soon cake into mere formalism and tradition and empty ideal. Then our Christianity will have become simply another religion in the world, instead of saving man and the earth from sin. Impossible as such a revival may seem to us, God yearns to pour it out upon us.

There are just four things necessary to open the way for this revival to flow in upon the world: a prophetic ministry; an unmaimed gospel; bold preaching; fearless drawing of the line in the churches between ownership and stewardship of property.

I. A PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Priests and Prophets: Run through your concordance of the Scriptures on "priests" and "priesthood," and on "prophets" and "prophecy." At a glance you will be impressed by the continual part that these, working side by side, have played in religious history. Each is distinct from the other, and yet each is necessary to the other. They are never separate; generally combined in men working together as in the case of Moses and Aaron; but sometimes in the same man as in case of Ezekiel.

Some men are masters of many details; others are mastered by a few eternal principles. In religion, the former are priests, the latter are prophets. The priest is an official in religion. The prophet is religion flaming forth in personal form. The priest is busy in maintaining the established order in religion. The prophet is concerned about the conquest of religion in new fields. The priest is the bed of the river; the prophet is a part of the flowing stream of the river. The priest contends for the form of religion; the prophet contends for the right contents in the form. They are the mechanics and dynamics of righteousness; the bones and the breath of faith; both necessary and neither much good without the other. One is in touch with the motive power; the other is entrusted with organization. The priest is the official trusted with the forms, statements, administrations of achieved religion.

But What Is the Prophet? He is, fundamentally, a seer—that is, one who sees the inside, the bottom, the tendency, the end of things. First of all, his soul sees God; he sees the deep in men: he sees the essential in history: he sees the really elemental in society and civilization: he sees his own times in proper perspective. In declaring what he sees, he becomes the forth-teller of God to his fellowmen. Incidentally and only incidentally, this makes him the foreteller of events in a world where God is making himself known and setting up his kingdom.

He is a mouthpiece of his own age. He is not depicting the future; he is trying to get his contemporaries to understand the present; the future is growing out of that, just as the oak comes out of the acorn. The future will always have to be interpreted in terms of the present. This makes prophets necessary just as long as truth unfolds itself in changing, growing times.

In easy, peaceful times when little history is being made, the priests predominate. They are busy preserving and solidifying what truth has already gained in control over the lives of men. But there is always a call for

Prophets in Times of Turmoil: Abraham, the first great prophet of God, appears in the first recorded westward migration of peoples. Moses came into view among a people rising from chains and slavery. Samuel stands out in a time of anarchy while Israel is becoming an united kingdom. Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah have royal corruption and national decay in the background of their day and work. Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel come along with the Exile during which a nation was torn up and transplanted twice and the larger part of it forever lost to history. Jesus the greatest of the prophets came when the whole world was in a stir.

But most of the turmoils of the past have been only local disturbances compared to the turmoil now on throughout the world. The troubles of mankind have been local, national, international in relatively small sections of the globe. Now we are in a world-upheaval. All parts of the earth are now in instantaneous touch. The spirit of unrest is everywhere. Governments are uncertain of themselves.

The deep need of the time is an authoritative call of the common conscience of man to the fundamental truths of life and society. In such times as these, governments and customs and institutions lose their sway over the people and they look to men of God to lead them into order and peace. Now is one of those auspicious times for a great prophet to appear, surrounded by a company of prophets set aflame with a message that will grip the whole world into a sense of its spiritual unity.

New Testament Prophets: John on Patmos did not shut up the mouth of prophecy. The notion that he did blunts and blights and sterilizes our modern Christianity. The New Testament is not a closed book; it is wide open. It does not make an end of prophecy: it only sets it forward into a larger field. Jesus fulfilled the prophets; now we are to fulfil Jesus.¹ He began what we are to finish.² There are many prophets mentioned in the New Testament, and the last book of the New Testament does not close prophecy. It opens up anew the foundations of prophecy; for near its close it declares "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."³

A live New Testament church is itself a community of prophets—a prophecy of what the kingdom of God is to be on earth. Some of its members must be prophets of God, normally. There will be need for the work of prophets until the whole truth of the gospel is applied in all the life of the world. The prophet is no more to bring new truths to men; but he is to discover lost truths of the Bible; he is to bring to light implied truths of the New Testament. These will perhaps often seem to be new truths.

The most important truth of the New Testament for our times is the lost truth of *economia*, the neglected truth of stewardship. When, in an experience of this truth such as the first Christians had, our ministry becomes prophetic in the intensity of its conviction and in its fearlessness of men and governments, there will blaze out from our churches deductions and implications and corollaries of this truth that will go like thunderbolts to the consciences of men. This will bring a revival indeed.

¹John 17: 18.

²Acts 1: 1.

³Rev. 19: 10.

A Timid Preacher Becomes a Fearless Prophet:
Let him tell it himself as he told it some years later in a sermon: "I was pastor in a college town. For two years I had been growing more afraid of my congregation every week. When I rose to speak on Sunday mornings I felt that every professor that sat before me was a specialist in his line and that I could not mention a thing but somebody in my audience knew more about it than I knew. Then there sat hundreds of students who, 'like young puppies wanting to gnaw fresh bones with their new teeth,' were awaiting every statement I might make to try their new-found powers of logic on it. I was sorely afraid of my crowd.

"It seemed to me that every Sunday my platform had got smaller for me till there was now hardly standing room in the pulpit for me. It seemed to me that the railing around the front of the pulpit had been getting higher every week till now I could hardly peep over it, standing on tiptoe. My liberty of speech was gone. I felt smothered in the house of God. I was about to resign as pastor.

"During this cowardly period in my ministry I sat one morning in my library studying the Old Testament prophets. It dawned on me for the first time, as I read about them, that back of the few true prophets whose names and parts of whose messages we now have, there was an army of false prophets whose names and messages were only worthy to perish. 'What's the difference between a true and a false prophet?' I asked. The question seemed to answer itself: 'The true prophet told what God told him to say; the false prophet tried to say what he thought the people expected him to say.'

"A presence, I will not say a person, seemed to come in at my door. It said to me, 'Are you a false or a true prophet?' 'I am neither a false nor a true

prophet—I am only a New Testament preacher,’ I answered. Then my accuser, stepping closer and becoming more personal to me, said: ‘Just as there is more light in the New Testament than in the Old, so now more is demanded of a New Testament preacher than was ever required of an Old Testament prophet!’ Then it seemed to me this accusing presence stepped nearer still, pointed a hand toward me, almost touched my nose with the tip of his finger as it turned to fire, and with piercing words asked: ‘Will you longer continue to keep up the mockery of your professional ministry Sunday after Sunday? Or will you speak for God to the people? Will you do this, or will you simply go on talking about God to the people in a dead, conventional way?’ Then said I: ‘I will be God’s prophet from now on in preaching the New Testament, or else I will never open my lips again in God’s name.’ I did not know it then; but I found out later that I passed that very moment the crisis of my ministry.

“The next Sunday morning at church it seemed to me I was another man. The railing around the pulpit, though it was still there, was out of my way, and I felt that there was a whole acre of the platform and that I had a divine right to walk all over it. I was no longer afraid of my crowd. In a few weeks a church building, needed and delayed for two generations in that community, was started. And from that day to this as a preacher of the gospel I have never feared the face of man.”

Other ministers could tell of experiences similar to this. Many need such experiences now if they are to be true in these tumultuous times. It costs to become a prophet of God. No prophet can live easy. He can give no thought to salary. He must be willing, if necessary, to support himself with his own hands and do God’s work without pay. He has often to defy his

age; he must be willing to die for his message. He must be absolutely consecrated to his work. He can have no fear of man in his soul. God is such immediate reality to him that all else seems only remote probability. And if I say I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain.¹ Wherever God's men feel these strange impulses from within and act them out, we have a prophetic ministry. That is our need now.

Every time God releases a ministry of this kind among men, a new era is born in Christian work. This can come only by prayer and fasting. We are in need of such a ministry now, who will preach

II. THE UNMAIMED GOSPEL

O the Pathos of the Gospel Mutilated!

The gospel of Christ in our day is mutilated by three parties: the Liberalists, the Literalists, the atheistic Economists. The first of these are misguided friends to it; the last one plays off indifferent to it. When the Liberalists get through with the gospel, it is thin air, myth. When the Literalists have fully treated the gospel, it is a burnt loaf, dry orthodoxy. When the atheistic Economists hit the gospel, they cut off its lower limbs and leave it a seemingly impractical ideal for men, an impossible good for the earth.

The Gospel Torn by Heresy—That is what the Liberalists would give us. They prick it here and there with scientific questions and theories. They gnaw into its vital parts with the snaggy teeth of human reason. They slash into its records with the methods of destructive higher criticism. When they get through with it, it is so hacked into pieces that different parts

¹Jer. 20: 9.

of it may be wrenched from their places and carried off by vagarists into extravagances like New Thought, Christian Socialism, Theosophy, Ethical Culture, Educationalism, Christian Science. Pricked, sawed, gnawed, slashed, hacked thus, the living gospel even might be expected to putrify.

The Gospel Crushed into Orthodoxy—That is what the Literalists may give us. Pinched into prejudices and traditions; or crumped into decisions of churches and councils; curved to fit in with public opinion; compressed into logical statements. Pinched, crumped, curved, compressed, the living gospel dries up. It cakes. It fossilizes.

The Gospel Crippled by Economists—For our modern world, that is the worst mutilation of all. It is done by economists who insist that the economic interest is supreme in human life; that religion is secondary and derived. They put the gospel at the mercy of commercialism. These economists are willing for God to reign in the souls of men; but not in their physical bodies nor in the material world where their physical bodies live. They hew off every appendage and finger of the gospel that is thrust into the economic world. They chop off the feet of Christianity so that it has to crawl for its existence among the bread and butter considerations of life.

These materialistic economists take advantage of every mutilation that the gospel receives at the hands of both Liberalists and Literalists and use it to discredit faith in God the Father of men and the Owner of the earth. With them, business supplants the kingdom of God. They regard Pentecost as an emotional excess in the first church.

The gospel, economically crippled, will never demand a real hearing of this materialistic age. The gospel must have the economic vitality to stand on its feet amid all the warring economic interests of

mankind; and it must have the economic energy and agility to lay its hands on property as God's very own and subdue it to the reign of Christ in the souls of men. A gospel economically sterilized, financially devitalized, will not demand the attention and confidence of our age.

2. *The Glory of an Unmutilated Gospel:*

(1) *It is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.* The idea of the kingdom of heaven had been growing in all the ages before Christ. Jesus came to set up this kingdom; the reign of God in the consciences of redeemed men and women placed in charge of the earth. His first public announcement to the multitudes was, "The kingdom of God is at hand."¹ The last answer that he gave to a private question was as to restoration of the kingdom to Israel.² The coming of the kingdom on earth is the first petition of the prayer the Lord taught men to pray. It was the theme of all his teachings, the kernel of all his parables, the key of all his miracles. His one supreme effort was to get his disciples to understand something of the kingdom. He called them, he lived with them, he ate with them, he walked with them, he rested with them, he prayed for them, he died before them, he rose from the dead for them, he ascended in their presence, teaching them all the time about this kingdom. But they did not understand the nature of the kingdom until the Spirit came to illuminate the teachings of Jesus in their hearts. The kingdom of God is the supreme matter of both this world and that world to come; the kingdom of heaven on earth. Jesus and the Holy Spirit finally made the disciples aware that they were in—

(2) *A Kingdom of Saved Brothers.* They learned at last that sin is the trouble with the world. That

¹Mark 1: 14.

²Acts 1: 6.

men and women are lost. That sin separates men from God and then separates men from one another: makes men hate God and one another.

But Jesus saves from sin; he teaches us its blackness and ruin and then dies to save us from it. He atones for it. We are saved from it in him. Accepting him, we are saved.

Then immediately we consciously become sons of God. That makes us brothers to one another. With our arms about our brothers and sisters, we look into the face of our Father. A state of freedom, love, equality, righteousness is set up in us and in our midst. Then I am not my brother's keeper, but my brother's very brother.

The early Christians experienced all this. In the light of the cross of Christ, their faith was so bright and sure, their love for God and man was so strong and warm that their testimony to these things convinced the people by the thousands and swept them into the kingdom of God. This is the glowing account of the triumph of the early Christians. But our gospel is still crippled, mutilated, if we overlook the fact that the first Christian church could not experience and practice all this truth of the kingdom without becoming

(3) *A Brotherhood of Saved Souls in Mastery over Material Things.* The kingdom of God on earth is a new life in men and a new order among men. Each true local church is a firstfruit of this new life, a pledge of this new order to come all over the world, a pathway to its realization. The economic order in each community around a church must be brought under the sway of the spirit of the church: the church in each case, incidentally but inevitably all the same, is to set up in the community around it the principles of *economia*; that is, house-management for God for the whole life of the people. In other words, it is to

establish in the life of the community just two truths: first, God is the Father of all that believe in Jesus; then, each Christian is a steward of the Father's goods and a brother of other Christians in the effort to save every lost soul in reach.

Of course, material things are intimately involved in such a vital program as this. God's reign and the Father's concern reach into the smallest detail and the lowest value of commerce and industry. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father's notice." It is not the commercial value of the sparrow that concerns the Father; yet even the commercial value of half a sparrow does not escape him.

Who furnished the ass upon which Jesus rode into Jerusalem in the Triumphal Entry?¹ The willingness of the man who raised that colt for the Lord to have it, put an obscure piece of property at the moral center of the universe, at the vital center of human history. Consecrated property shines with divine significance. So with Peter's boat; with all its fishy smell, it became the greatest pulpit of the ages. All property in the first church took on a solemn meaning. An exception to this principle killed two prominent members of the church.

This is the most practical aspect of the gospel; it is still neglected, unrealized, undeveloped. But it is a vital part of the gospel. If we are to believe and practice a full gospel, a prophetic ministry must get ready to proclaim it. It must be set forth in a rounded out training of Christians in our churches. This is the economic phase of the gospel.

Property ruins and damns men when it gets separated from a sense of God in their lives and becomes the end of their living. The subserviency of material wealth to the rights of God's children and to the ends

¹Matt. 21: 1f.

of God's kingdom is taught all through God's Word. It sounds all through the teachings of the Bible like the bass-tone of the melody from beginning to end. Proof-texts of this teaching are too numerous even to give references to them, much the less to quote them.¹

In order to get the right perspective on this aspect of the gospel and on this phase of the Christian life, it would be well for us to pause here and review some *Property Tragedies* of the Bible:

The Garden of Eden. In the garden God reserved one tree, only one tree, to perpetuate forever in the minds of his children the truth that God owned the whole garden; that men have access to none of its trees but for the goodness of God. But man insisted on his right to the whole garden, he wanted to be "as God." Out man had to go.

Cain and Abel. They were at the first altar with their offerings. Cain did not bring the best of the first-fruits of the field to acknowledge that God was the Owner, as Abel brought the fat of the first-born of the flocks. Just as soon as Cain allowed himself to feel he owned the field, he denied God's right to it and thought his own brother was against him. Covetousness,—hate—murder at God's first altar outside of Eden.

Abraham and Lot. Lot coveted immediate riches, so he chose the rich plains and the cities close by. Abram was content to be a mere steward of all that he might ever possess, so he had the far-off view, the patient heart, and was willing to go the rocky, barren way. In a little while Lot waked up in a burning city, his family had to flee to the mountains, his wife died in the flight, and the light closes upon him in

¹Here are a few scattered references: Gen. 12: 7; 14: 17f; 32: 3f; Lev. 23: 14; Job. 25: 7; Prov. 22: 1; Ezek. 7: 11, 12, 19; 26: 12; 27: 13, 27; Haggai 2: 8; Hab. 2: 9-11; Zech. 7: 7; 9: 3, 4; Matt. 6: 33; 16: 26; 19: 24; 24: 47, 51; 27: 3f; Mark 15: 42f; Luke 4: 7; 6: 24; 14: 33; 16: 19f; 22: 53; John 1: 3, 10, 11; Acts 20: 32-35; Rom. 11: 35, 36; 1 Cor. 3: 21-23; 2 Cor. 6: 10; 1 Tim. 6: 5-19; James 1: 9-11; 5: 1f; Rev. 3: 17, 18.

shameless incest with his daughters. But Abram goes God's way, becomes intercessor for Lot, comes into control of great wealth, defeats kings, and becomes the father of a nation great in number as the stars of the sky and the sands of the sea, the chosen people of God through the ages.

Moses and Pharaoh. Moses, adopted grandson of Pharaoh, saw the children of Israel as the people of God; Pharaoh saw them only as property. He did not hear their cry; he counted their wages; they were his chattels. Moses asked him to let them go. But Pharaoh held to his forbidden property. They were a purely economic consideration with him. He refused to let them go. He paid a fatal price for holding to property. The rivers are turned into blood; the land is covered with frogs; then come swarms of lice and flies; the murrain of cattle; the plague of boils, of hail, of the locusts; then thick darkness appalls the land: all the first-born are slain. Finally Pharaoh himself and his army, running after what belongs to God, are overwhelmed and drowned in the Red Sea.

Achan at Ai. Achan stole some of the devoted spoils of Jericho. In this confession, he said, "Of a truth, I have sinned against Jehovah the God of Israel. When I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels' weight, then I coveted them and took them, and behold they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent." Then Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan, and the silver, and the mantle and the wedge of gold and his sons and his daughters and his oxen and his asses and his sheep and his tent and *all* that he had. And all Israel stoned him with stones and burnt him with fire and raised over him a heap of stones. A family ruined for a rag, a little silver and some gold!

Judas and Jesus. Judas had an opportunity equal to Peter or Matthew. But he loved money more than he loved his Lord. The price of his own soul was counted out to him. He took it in betrayal of his Lord. In remorse he flung the money back at those who gave it to him, and killed himself. For listening to the click of coin in hearing of the cross of Christ, Judas' name became the symbol of covetousness and treachery to all times.

Ananias and Sapphira. This man and woman in the first church were convinced that they were not owners of what they possessed. They had shared in the illumination of the Holy Spirit which made this an unanimous conviction in that church. But they played false; they lied to God about property. They were made to face their sin. They keeled over dead under the condemnation of God. Their corpses were hurried out indecently to their graves.

Eve and Adam claimed too much in the garden—and they were expelled. Cain handled property wrong at the first altar; innocent Abel was killed as a result. Lot stood with Abraham in an historic hour on the edge of the Promised Land; he made there the wrong choice in order to get quick riches; the flight, the death, the ruin, the eternal disgrace of himself and his family ensued. Pharaoh reigned at the time when God was making a chosen people his concern, and Pharaoh knew them only as slaves and property and brought ruin upon himself, his nation, his civilization. Achan grabbed some property, just as Israel in the plan of God was beginning to conquer the country that God had given them, and death struck him and all his on the spot. Judas touched base coin at the cross-roads of history and in the light of the cross he committed suicide. Ananias and Sapphira lied about property and held it away from God at the headspring of Christian history, during a time when the sense of God's

nearness and power in men was temporarily holding economic sway over all their goods, and they dropped dead in their perfidy.

These are just a few of the property tragedies recorded in dealings with men. They are mysterious victims of the love of money. There are solemn turns all along in the course of history in which property, money, seems to become God Almighty's live wire, and they who touch it then with selfish dishonest hands are worse than executed.

The Culmination of Bible Teaching. All the teachings of the Bible are progressive and cumulative. For instance, sin starts as the suggestion of a serpent and grows into a whole lost world, hell itself. The idea of a Saviour from sin begins in a vague promise as to a bruise of the serpent's head by the heel of a future child and glows into larger and brighter outline, until a Saviour rises from the dead and takes his seat on the throne of heaven.

Likewise, the truth of God's ownership of property is at the first only a simple reservation of one tree in one garden; then it is the gift of a promised land to a chosen people; then the declaration in the Psalms that the earth is the Lord's, closing in the Old Testament with the challenge of the last of its prophets, "Will a man rob God?"

Then in the New Testament, it breaks out louder and stronger than ever in Jesus as to the utter impossibility of the rich entering the kingdom of God. It comes to its climax finally in the ignition of the total accumulated teachings of the Bible in the experience that broke out like a conflagration as a Spirit-wrought conviction in the first church of Jesus Christ.

The need, the need now, is for a prophetic ministry that stands for an unmutilated, living gospel, not torn by heresy, not crushed into orthodoxy, not crippled by economism, that saves souls from sin for this world

and for that to come, that makes them brothers and lifts them into loving mastery over material things. Such an order of prophets in our modern gospel ministry, heralds of God in a world-wide revival that sets up the throne of Christ over modern industry and commerce throughout the earth, cannot come without prayerful restudy of the Bible and of the record of the beginnings of Christianity.

III. BOLD PREACHING

1. *An actual experience of the truth to be preached is necessary.*

First of all, God must be a reality to the real preacher; he must know in his own soul, too, that God's kingdom is a present fact in men and among them, the sublimest and the mightiest concern in history, the organizing energy in man and in the earth which is hindered in its work of renovation and construction only by sin in the hearts of men. Before he can actually believe that Jesus Christ puts sin out of the way, he must be cleansed of his own sin and brought into such deep, clear, warm love of his fellowmen that he yearns to have them saved from sin, too.

But this is not yet enough experience of God for the prophet-preacher who is to declare the gospel in our day. With other saved souls he must be brought into a fellowship so deep-felt, so life-filling, so heart-swelling that material considerations, which cannot be made useful to this fellowship, are renounced and ignored. He must have a share in the united spiritual mastery of saved souls over material things, so that he can take the New Testament instead of political economy, *economia* instead of economics, stewardship instead of ownership, as the controlling principle of his own life and declare to others, with

passionate positiveness, that the very life of our civilization, as well as the salvation of individual souls, depends upon the rapid rooting of these truths in the world.

The necessity now, already acute, is a ministry that has a compelling vision of Christ enthroned in the hearts of men projecting his reign through their brains and bodies into all the commercial and industrial arrangements of mankind. Preacher-priests may be content for the gospel to be frozen into the icy forms of our present economic order; but prophet-preachers must maintain that our whole economic order is to be molten into the moulds of the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ. And their holy earnestness and bold preaching must build the furnaces in our churches for this melting.

A millionaire has no more right to waste a dollar of God's money than a washerwoman has. This now sounds absurd to many church members. But in the presence of the cross of Christ the difference between a thousand million dollars and ten cents is negligible. This is *economia*. Those who preach these truths effectively must have such experience of them in their own lives that they do not have to argue about them. Not logic, but testimony, still wins the day. There can be no testimony without experience; it is then mere argument or hearsay. Witnessing to the economic truths thus actually experienced in our lives is serious business. It is no playhouse performance; it is courthouse procedure: the life and death of lost souls, of covetous churches, of a collapsing civilization are at stake in this witnessing. And in our present critical situation there is—

2. *Much to Cow the Preachers* who have glimpsed the economic significance of the cross.

First of all, many ministers, pastors, evangelists, still seem blind or dead to these vital economic truths

of the kingdom and to the economic perils of our times. A few are awake and alive to the situation. However, thoughtful business men are thinking far ahead of the ministry in many places on these urgent lines where Christianity and economics are beginning to touch each other at a new angle in human life. The ministry is now largely occupied with a regular routine of religious work that seems to rely upon mere words written, spoken, sung, or prayed, to bring some kind of a spell over the souls of men; or else it is so occupied in doing things practical, but incidental, that it neglects to keep aglow in the people the Christian motive and view of life; or else still again faintly interested in a dilute faith in Christ and the Bible, much of the ministry is gone off into philosophy and education and reform as the hope of the world. Ritualists, practicalists, theorists, these are all contented fat priests enjoying what Christianity has already accomplished in the world; not prophets of God ready to lead in a charge for new conquests.

Many seriously thinking men, comfortably located in the ministry, have seen just far enough into the economic implications of the gospel to know that to stand for them squarely means an attack on accepted theories, usages, customs, laws, indulgences of our churches and our present civilization as to property. They fear that they will be called radical and considered dangerous if they are true to original Christianity in an application to our modern world. They dare not face the prosperous, well-organized, selfish business of our day with an unflinching declaration of God's full right to the whole earth. This is no time for weaklings and cowards and easy livers in the ministry. Our pulpit must now strike again the tone of the Old Testament prophets and of Jesus. This, or the ministry withers. Conditions that make weak men stand aghast drive strong men into courageous

action. If we are really in touch with original Christianity and have fundamental insight into the needs of our time, there are

3. *Many Things to Nerve Us.*

The unfailing God is real to us. With him near us and in us, we cannot fear men nor man. With the conviction of the reality of the economic phase of the Christian experience, we have at last a worthy issue with which to challenge the modern business world; an issue that will put our modern Christianity on visible par with factories, department stores, skyscrapers, railroads, garages, banks, with more right to live and thrive than any of them, for it is to become the life of all of them if they are to be used in the service instead of the exploitation of mankind. Little as the economic phase of Christianity has yet been developed, already every economic depression is foreshadowed by a religious decline.¹

Thus Christianity, once given its fuller economic interpretation, will come into direct grips with our hurried business world. The prophetic elements in our modern ministry are already feeling the thrill, the stimulation, the challenge of this new contact. This contact means a contest. The language of our preaching is changing; with theology and economics at last in touch, the business world must be made to see the cross and to feel the Christ. Practical, everyday business words are catching afire with new meaning in the pulpit, and going like thunderbolts to office and shop, or glistening like God's lightning across the open fields. In a situation like this, timid ministers are going to stiffen into unbending prophets aflame with the message of God for worldly churches and for a tottering society.

¹Babson, *The Fundamentals of Property*, p. 86.

There is already an encouraging response to any minister who stands true to God on the property question. There is a nucleus of elect people in nearly every church ready for this message. In some churches large audiences day after day wait to hear God's truth as to lands and houses and stores and factories and money. This response in the churches is the brightest sign in our troublous times.

This writer has tried these waters just a little, and "the swimming is fine!" For a year he gave himself to Vital Stewardship Revivals in the churches. He went only on invitation of local churches and was entirely supported by freewill offerings of the congregations to whom he ministered. Invitations came faster than he could accept them. And poorly as he did this work, he went far enough before he was stricken with failing health three years ago to find out this kind of ministry would be as well supported now in the churches as our present conventionalized, superficial evangelism.

This state of affairs marks a new day in our churches: it shows they are getting ready to support a ministry that dares to be prophetic in its dealings with the property of Christians. If ministers will fearlessly walk God's way in matters of property now, they will be restored to their old-time power among men. Otherwise, the ministry may survive only as a parasite upon the religious traditions of society.

There were never so many honest, fundamental questions in the mind of the common man concerning property as there are now. Millions are soon to look to the Bible and to the churches for answers to these questions. God pity us if we should have for the next generation a ministry in our churches who cannot give a convincing, satisfying answer to these questions. In that case, the Bolsheviks will get us.

The wind of God is blowing
Through the open minds of men,
And his sharp share is plowing
In the troubled hearts of men:
And soon there'll be a sowing,
And a springing and a growing,
And then a new grace flowing
Through all the lives of men.
For so shall come God's harvest home
In the ripened souls of men.

—Newton.

Ministers, equipped and inspired to preach the gospel now sorely needed in an age surrendered to the reign of things economic, must not quail before the rich, for they sorely need the gospel of vitalized stewardship. Their souls are already in peril for the lack of it. But the biggest task and the most important is:

Reach the poor with the teachings of economia. They will receive it. Jesus loved them and they loved to hear him. They are not case-hardened in their economic views. They are in touch with nature and reality. They are conscious of their dependence. Many of them are young and ready to learn. They will accept the truth once made plain to them.

Temporary power is with the wealthy. Ultimate power is with the poor. The poor are in the majority in every government in the world. All those who have failed in business of any kind, most of the women, and practically all the world's workers, and entirely all the children of the nations are counted in the throngs of the poor. Parliaments and courts are in their hands when they wake up in any matter. They are the source of the world revolutions and upheavals.

They get hungry and cold. They see the senseless extravagance of the rich and get impatient. Teachers, reformers, prophets, agitators nearly always come from their ranks.

The poor, they will soon possess the wealth of the earth. Those with an income of over five thousand per year receive only 18 per cent of the total income of our country now.¹ Who will be president of the Standard Oil Company or of the United Steel Corporation fifty years from now? Very likely men who have nothing at all in their own names now. So with all the leaders of the big business in every country, every half-century.

A minister, who had glimpsed the economic significance of the gospel of Jesus, was in the business place of a great merchant talking to him about God's rights to his stores. The merchant seemed indifferent and resentful and tried to shift the topic of conversation. Then said the minister: "Go on; I'll not bother you any more; I am not as much concerned about you as I am about your clerks. In the long run they are of more importance to God in your stores than you are. Go on, God may not need you at all in this business after just a little while." That jarred the prosperous old man. He turned pale, and tears started in his eyes. His voice trembled, "Yes, yes; in fifteen years more some of the young fellows in this store will have charge of this business; I do not know which of them it will be."

Get the clerks and the workers into training for the economic conquest of the world by Jesus Christ, if you want the business world a generation hence to bow to Christ.

*Team-work among ministers*² is now a necessity, if we are to get ready to do our work in a revival that will vitalize stewardship in our churches. There is in our present situation so much to cower and so much to nerve a preacher whose soul has been gripped

¹Wilson, *The Christian and His Money Problems*, p. 99.

²The Steward League of Baptist Ministers is a start in this direction. For information address The Steward League, Box 127, Mars Hill, N. C.

by the economic axioms of Christian experience, that it is expecting too much for one minister alone, or of a few ministers scattered far apart to stand, like lonesome heralds of a new age, for the economic application of the gospel in the life of the churches. Those who see and feel these truths alike should get into touch and stay in touch with one another.

In each denomination, let those ministers and Christians, few or many, who are ready to stand together before God in preparation for a revival in the local churches that will give all use of property a spiritual significance among Christians, seek to get mutually acquainted with one another, open a quiet exchange somehow that will keep them in continual mail touch, and arrange for at least one meeting each year in which, in unhurried state of mind, they can pray together and restudy intensively the record of the first days of Christianity, especially the four Gospels and the first five chapters of Acts, considering carefully the economic challenge that confronts Christianity in our day.

In this way the fires may slowly spread in the ministry as they study and pray on these lines, a kind of concert of God's prophets for our times will form itself in each denomination and work quietly until this revival becomes general among churches and ministers. In the meantime, we should be busy,

IV. DRAWING THE LINE IN THE CHURCHES

1. *The simple secret is to get reproduced in our modern churches the attitude toward property which entirely possessed the first church.*

This is distinctly a work of the Holy Spirit in the churches.¹ For it was "when they were all filled with

¹Acts 4: 31, 32.

the Holy Spirit" that "not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own." The sole need now for this revival, this reproduction, economically speaking, of original Christianity, is a meeting that the Holy Spirit may use in this work of his in the churches.

2. The fundamental issue is, Are Christians Owners or Stewards of Property?

This is the bottom of the matter. No man can be both owner and steward. If a man is owner of anything, then he is under no obligation to any being above him or to anybody around him in the use he makes of it. If he is only steward, then to use it as if it were his own is embezzlement, misappropriation, dishonesty.

Ownership makes property an end; stewardship regards it as a means. Ownership makes money jingle with earth's discords; stewardship makes it ring with the music of heaven. The owner and the steward might be compared to the buzzard and the bee; one feeds on death, the other feeds the living.

If all the wealth of the white man's world now in possession of nominal Christians were subjected to the economic principles of the first church as recorded in Acts 4, we should enter a new age at once. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church¹; one of the gates of hell is the ownership of property by men; but even it shall not prevail.

From the standpoint of Bible teaching, the ownership of anything by man is a snare and a delusion. The truth is, God is the owner, and man in possession represents him as his steward. But the truth of stewardship can not be gotten into a man's soul until every shadow of the lie of ownership is cast out.

¹Matt. 16: 18.

That man is steward of his possessions is a fact of Christian experience. The young Christian is aware of it the moment he is converted. In his very conversion, the light of the Holy Spirit falls on the elemental instinct of possession in him and subdues it to God, just like all his other natural instincts are brought into the restraint and control of God. Stewardship to God in property is the material side of personal consecration. In consecration the Christian gives all he is; in stewardship he gives all he has.

A man fully deluded into the idea of ownership can not be saved without getting clear of what he has. The rich young ruler is an example of that.¹ He was so obsessed with the idea of possession he wanted to *inherit eternal life*; he had great possessions. Jesus deemed it unsafe for him to keep any property, even as a trust. A man unwilling to give his property away is unfit to keep it in trust. The deeper their sins and the more forgiven to them, the higher the uses to which people seem to put their property. The sinful woman used the income from her prostitution to anoint the feet of Jesus. So also Zacchæus. Such characters are not held from the higher uses of property by an over-developed sense of possession; there is no question in their minds about the right of possession, which in a measure frees them from materialism.

When we accept salvation as the free gift of God, we acknowledge him as the universal Owner. The battle between the flesh and the spirit,² extended into the economic zone of life, becomes the struggle between ownership and stewardship. God's signature in blood is upon every dollar of every true Christian's

¹Matt. 19: 16f.

²Gal. 5: 13-26.

property. We cannot control property nor enjoy it without the use of our bodies. But our bodies themselves are God's.¹

The truth of the stewardship of property is in every Christian soul. But it gets submerged in his subconsciousness. It ceases to be operative often. But it is there and waits to be called out and put into action. What we need now are protracted meetings that regard the sense of stewardship as one of the necessary evidences of regeneration in young Christians, and insist upon its presence in the profession of every new member of the church and that wake up the sense of stewardship out of the subconsciousness of old Christians in whom it has gone to sleep. Anything short of this is the preaching of a mutilated gospel, is a partial work in dealing with the souls of the people, is the persistence of a fragmentary Christianity in our churches.

Use in these revival meetings, if it seems best, some kind of pledge card that sets into the open the heaven-high, hell-deep distinction between owners and stewards before God. Confront every member of the church and every new convert with this distinction and insist on a definite committal in each case for or against the kingdom of God in all property matters. Not yet, maybe never, should this be made a test of fellowship in a church. But the line should be drawn straight and taut in the attention of the church. This will reveal the Ananiases and Sapphiras. And they will get out of the way, or fall out of the way. When all the members of a church are united in a sense of God's ownership of them and of all their possessions, there arises among them a fellowship sweet and solemn which burns like a fire of

¹1 Cor. 6: 12-20.

heaven in the souls of the covetous who deny God with their goods. Then they get right, or they get out.¹

The practical question is,

3. *What Can a Christian Steward Do with Property?*

On general principles a Christian steward can not be a *spendthrift nor a miser nor an oppressor*. He cannot waste it in luxury or sin. He cannot hoard it in selfishness. He cannot use it as a power to control his fellowmen. He will make it produce all possible and do all the good he can with it.

The Christian steward has opportunity to acknowledge God's right to his property *in his last will and*

¹The following is a suggested form of Pledge Card which drives the line sharp, clear, urgent, between owners and stewards:

CONSECRATION AND STEWARDSHIP

I am not my own; I am bought with a price. (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.)

I share the unanimous conviction of the First Church of Jesus Christ that what I possess is not my own; it is God's. "Not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own." (Acts 4: 32.)

In line with the plain teachings of God's Word and with this Primal Conviction of Original Christian Experience, I begin at once to administer all my possessions in God's name, as indicated by the sign of the Cross (+) which I make below:

.....(1) I invest, or keep invested, as God's all I possess, and as his steward I render to him regularly a definite, fixed proportion (at least 10 per cent) of the income from the investment. My wages or salary I count as income from the investment of my life which is also God's, and so account of it in my regular offerings to God.

.....(2) I now begin to so study and write my Last Will and Testament that no doubt as to my profession of God's ownership of what I possess may be left in the mind of anyone who may live after me.

.....(3) I vow to sell my possessions and give the proceeds at once to God's cause. (Many of the first Christians did this very thing. If I am unwilling to comply with (1) or (2) above, there is grave danger that I am unconsciously guilty of the deceiving, damning sin of Covetousness. In that case, perhaps I had better do this, in order to give Jesus Christ a chance to save me.) (1 Cor. 5; Matt. 19: 16-30.)

.....(4) I would enroll myself for Training that will drill Stewardship into my Character and Habits and increase my Earning Power.

Name Address.....

Date

testament. When he comes to think of dying he will naturally put something into his will that makes everybody to know that he knew that God is the real owner of his estate. This should be stressed in protracted meetings. This is often the last chance for God's unfaithful stewards to show to men that they really repented of their sins. When a man comes to write his will, he shows whether he regards his children as pets to be pampered, or as children also of his Father who are to spend their lives in the service of their Father. When we consider the fabulous accumulations of wealth each generation leaves intestate, or transfers by foolish wills to be contested in courts and to be squandered by degenerates or to be used in endowing idleness for generations to come, the minister of Christ who represents the Father of all men and the Owner of all property in his ministry, should not quail for a moment in urging Christians to write their wills, and to write them in such a way that they leave a dying testimony to God in the way they dispose of their estates. This habit on the part of ministers will unlock immense resources for kingdom work, resources that otherwise may be a curse to those who receive them.

While he lives, *the Christian steward will invest his possessions for the greatest possible honest returns and he will render to God regularly and in worship a proportionate part of the income from them.* He will settle on a proportion that satisfies his own conscience, and that he feels in his conscience pleases God. This definite portion, at least a tenth, he will render to God. If he stops at less than the Jew gave under the law, then he is not under the law, nor under grace; he is under disgrace. He shows by that very act that he does not know what grace is. In his case the gospel has failed; it does not do as much for him as the law would have done. He falls below Moham-

medan and Mormon. A common hen will pay for her keep and pay her master a profit of one dollar a year. That is better than many a Christian does. "How much better is a man than"—a hen?

To the real Christian, the tithe is a tiny incident of stewardship. If stewardship were the Christian's clothes, then the tithe would be the buttons to hold them on. If stewardship were his shoes, then the tithe would be his shoe-strings to keep his shoes from pulling off in the mud. The tithe is the carter-pin of economia; it does not work, but it holds on the wheels that do the work. One-tenth tests our obedience; nine-tenths tests our consecration.

Earn wealth with the toils of a consecrated life that you may use it for the glory of God; buy money without selling your soul. The amount of wealth that can be safely spent by an owner is very small. The amount that can be used faithfully and advantageously by a steward is unlimited. So there needs be no limitation of the accumulation of faithful stewards.

Some people plead debt against rendering God his dues. If a man thinks he has met a debtor with higher claims on him than God's claims, he knows a mighty little god, not the true God. His debts are likely for the enlargement of his business. If in that case he pleads his debts against God's rights, he had better go into bankruptcy at once—to save his own soul!

If you are really a Christian steward, all your income above necessary expenses should be rendered to God, unless you have a dedicated business into which you can put it.

Possibly, *some men should give away all their possessions just as soon as possible.* If a man finds it impossible to quit wasting or hoarding or oppressing with his property, or if he is unwilling to give God a regular, reasonable portion of his income, at least a

tenth, he had better get clear of every bit of his property the first moment he can. It is damning his soul. His character is under the blight of covetousness. When a man cannot turn loose his property before God, his soul is lost. The alternative for such a man is, be damned or become a pauper or a steward. This is the plain teaching of Jesus.¹

Every young Christian, before his soul shall become enmeshed and hardened in earthly possessions, should go into training that will drill the principles of stewardship into his character and habits and at the same time increase his earning power. The churches should arrange to give this line of training to all their young people who will take it.

With the experience of the first church reproduced in the churches of to-day, with the issue squarely and clearly drawn between owners and stewards of property in our churches, with Christian stewards strictly holding their property to the uses of God's kingdom on earth, we come to

4. The New Battle-line of Christianity.

Our Christianity has been intrenched behind a distinction between things sacred and things secular. Here it has gotten comfortable and thoroughly satisfied with itself. It has taken it so easy, that it has become degenerate. But when it is made evident that there is nothing sacred and nothing secular among mere things, that only persons are consecrated or wicked, and that all things are to be brought under the feet of Jesus Christ, Christians must rise out of the trenches where they have been hiding and charge across open fields and invade the whole economic order as the conquering forces of the kingdom of Christ.

¹Luke 14: 33; Matt. 19: 16-30.

There lived in one of the Southern States a wonderful man, Noah Biggs. He was a horsetrader and a steward of God; supporter of missionaries, builder of orphan homes, endower of Christian schools. Can you imagine this man of God in a trade with a common horse jockey?

They are swapping an old plug. The little narrow-eyed, low jockey with squeaky, metallic voice, says, "That ten dollars is mine and I am going to have it!" Whereupon, Noah Biggs seems to rise about ten feet high. He stoops down over the old plug and the little jockey and says in low, musical voice, "No; that ten dollars is not yours: it is not mine; it is God's, and I represent God in this horsetrade. If you get that ten dollars, the world is just ten dollars poorer just as long as it stays in your little dirty pocket. If it passes my way, the world is ten dollars richer and the kingdom of heaven is ten dollars nearer as long as I hold it in my hand for God's uses."

Instantly, with two such men in a trade, the sway-back of the old plug horse becomes a part of the battle-line between covetousness and Christianity, between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. The backbone of the old horse is at once a sector of the battleline between heaven and hell in their struggle for the control of this whole earth.

Every horse, cow, automobile, truck, store, acre of land, house, ledger, daybook, factory, train, ship, every bushel of corn, every pound of pork, everything with a commercial value, is involved in the battle between Satan and Christ.

There was once a war in heaven. But there is war now on earth far more interesting than the war in heaven. The battle in heaven was between angels. The battle on earth is between sons of God and sons of the devil. In this affray between covetousness and righteousness, between ownership and stewardship,

Christians and demons incarnate are hurling into the fray, not guns and swords and bombs, but lands, houses, cars, banks, factories, stores and every article of property held by men. Only a small part of the conflict is to be waged in the churches; they are only mustering and drilling grounds for the soldiers. The strife between the ownership and the stewardship of property is waged across every counter, at every bank window, in every office, at every employment bureau, on every train and ship and automobile. The whole economic order is the battlefield of the Christian. If the ownership economics should win, the earth passes into the hands of Satan and wicked men. When the stewardship economics, in one word *economia*, shall fully win, the earth will be in the hands of God the Father and his children. One would cut the world to pieces and leave it in interminable war. The other will unify the world and give it eternal peace.

God or Mammon? The New Testament or political economy? Jesus Christ or Carl Marx? *Economia* or economics? Ownership or stewardship? These are the alternatives. The battle is on. It is beginning in the churches. It is to be pushed out into all industry and commerce.

Oh! for an Evangel in our churches that will vitalize the stewardship of Christians in things material! That is our only salvation now from materialism. Let there be continual crying unto God for it, and faithful preparation for it until it comes. This is to be the next great revival. It is the door to a new era on earth.

CHAPTER V

COVETOUSNESS CURED



REVIVAL that makes real in the souls of men what the first Christians felt as to property is a general necessity now to save our churches and our people from the deadening, benumbing, deceiving, damning sin of covetousness.

The world is full of decoys. All appearances cannot be trusted. We see things often in false lights; we measure them by false standards. It is a trick of the bad to save itself by getting mixed with the good. The best is often almost covered up with the worst: and the worst is oftener hid under the shadow of the best. The line between right and wrong is not always straight; in the most dangerous places, it runs zig-zag. Do not wonder then that covetousness, the most blighting of sins, is over and over again

I. DISGUISED AS A VIRTUE

1. *All Sin is Deceptive*; it is its nature to be so.

It grows out of the most fundamental lie that ever entered the universe; namely, that God is not God. This is the mother-lie of all lies. All falsehoods and deceptions hide in it. Satan, in insinuating the lie that God is not really God, begot unbelief in Eden itself as his daughter, the serpent-queen of all evil in the world, and thus became the father of lies.

No untruth, no deception, no falsehood, no insincerity, no trick can stand in the blazing presence of the true God. It withers. The Bible flashes, rings, roars, with truth; it is God speaking. Its truth shines; it is

seen only in its own light as the sun is seen in its own light; but its light is severer and brighter than that of the sun, and casts no shadow except where it falls upon a lie in the hearts of men or devils.

The Bible's steadiest refrain is warning against deception: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?"—"The deceitfulness of riches"—"The deceitfulness of sin"—"Take heed that no man deceive you"—"False Christs and false prophets deceiving the very elect, if possible"—"Men waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived"—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked"—These are tones of a swelling note that runs clear through God's Word.

Back of all sin and temptation is Satan, the arch-deceiver, glistening, singing serpent, "himself transformed into an angel of light"; his emissaries, "false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ."

2. But of all deceiving sins, the most deceiving is Covetousness.

Sin is the deceiving Satan destroying souls; then covetousness, the most destructive sin, is due to be the most deceiving. In all the category of sin, covetousness is the most subtle and indefinite; the hardest to recognize and oftenest entirely hid; it is not an act of the body, it is a state of mind; it is not a definite deed, and it may break out in any direction and in any form of sin. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me, nor make graven images," etc.,—an idol and a worshiper bowing before it; you can see them with the eye. "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain," a vile oath, you can hear it with the ear, it rips the air. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"—one whole particular day of every week set apart; we can be conscious of every passing hour of it.

"Honor thy father and thy mother"—the faces of our two best earthly friends appear and their hands beckon to us. "Thou shalt not kill"—you see at once warm, red blood flowing. "Thou shalt not commit adultery"—the violated integrity of the family looms up before us involving persons whom we know personally. But when we come to "Thou shalt not covet," we touch the central rottenness of the human heart, the passion to own, the desire to own with no regard for any consideration but self, the ambition to be god in ourselves over the things and people around us; a denial of the right of our fellow beings to houses, wives, servants, oxen, lands, asses, or "anything that is thy neighbor's." This last commandment against covetousness applies to every material thing in reach of our souls; it is a kind of climax, an epitome, a summary of all the others.

The covetous man is capable of and in imminent danger of every sin in the decalogue. Covetousness is a sugar-coated capsule for every poison of the souls of men.

Covetousness generally goes in good style; it wears stylish clothes, rides in cars to respectable churches and behaves during service, when it is prosperous. When it is not prosperous, it envies the well-to-do and foment dissension and hate among neighbors.

3. Our Age is almost duped by Covetousness.

It is so common that our religious sensibilities are deadened to it. Our bodies are in hilarious activity and luxury; our souls are in a state like that of the nearly frozen; the sensation is one of comfort; and the sole desire is to be allowed to go to sleep. This is a prevalent symptom of our decadent church life in America. Our covetousness, seldom given its real name, calls itself nowadays by such euphonious titles as "good provider for his family," prosperity, success, business acumen, commercial strategy, economic

foresight, industrial genius, thrift, and the like. These are all good necessary qualities; but diabolical covetousness camouflages itself in them and passes among us every day unrecognized, uncondemned; often commended even! It is practiced—and praised!—in various forms by the most influential people in church and community. Display of material equipment for churches, ostentatious service and show and prosperous formality in religious work are its clothes, having the form but denying the power of godliness.

A rude shock awaits us! Covetousness is one of the decorations of our age; but it is poison. A deadly cosmetic covering its face; a bunch of high-colored noxious flowers rooted in its heart. It pleases and kills!

"Look! Father, at my beautiful spotted necklace!" exclaimed the giddy girl. "Great heavens," exclaimed the horrified father, "you have a live rattlesnake coiled around your neck!" A rattlesnake for a necklace; its venomous fang ready to pierce the jugular vein of its foolish victim. That's the plight of our present materialistic age; charmed, tied; but by the reptile of covetousness.

Covetousness is not virtue; it is—

II. DAMNING SIN.

Often seeming a merit, it is the foulest and most fatal of sins.

In an Insane Asylum, there was an inmate who proudly spoke to every visitor that passed her and said, "Come in, I want to show you the most beautiful flower you ever saw." Then she would lead the visitor inside, and unbuttoning her dress and opening her bosom to view, the insane woman would say, "Isn't that the most beautiful rose you ever saw?" But it was not a rose at all—it was a red, angry cancer fast eating out the life of the poor demented

creature. That's it! Covetousness is a cancer in the bosom of our churches cankering its way into the very heart of our age. It is even more virulent in so-called Christendom than in heathendom. It is a malignant growth in churches that ignore the teachings of the Bible on property and discount the experiences of Christians in the first of the churches. In such churches, those most successfully covetous often take the high seats.

There is no other alternative: our churches must now either be centers of economia, or they will be the very beds and abodes of covetousness.

1. Covetousness Twice Forbidden in the Ten Commandments.

In the decalogue idolatry is forbidden once. Profanity is contrabanded once. Observance of the Sabbath is commanded once. The honor of father and mother is enjoined once. Murder is interdicted once. Adultery is debarred once. Lying is outlawed once. But so deceptive and damning is covetousness that directly and indirectly it is prohibited *twice!* Twice forbidden: "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not covet" are both commandments against covetousness. Stealing is the outward act, coveting is the inward motive: if men never coveted, they never would steal.

Why *two* commandments against covetousness? Because it is so insidious and so fatal to the souls of men that a loving God and Father would not allow men to live in the world without double warning against it.

2. Covetousness in Black Company in the New Testament, too.

Jesus classes covetousness with the vilest of sins, with fornications, murders, thefts, adulteries in the

catalogue of sins¹, that proceed "from within, out of the heart of men."

In the heart-rending description of the slimy depths to which the world sinks when God is forgot,² covetousness is put low down in the foulest gang of sins: read the list of this low pit, "unrighteousness, wickedness, *covetousness*, maliciousness, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things."

In the discipline of a New Testament church³, the covetous were to be excluded from membership in the same class and under the same censure as fornicators, extortioners, idolators, revilers, drunkards.

So covetousness is no respectable sin. It smells of the pit. The fornicator, wrecking the home life of his neighbor; the extortioner, wringing out with greedy hand the honest living of his neighbor; the idolater, bowing to a false god in the presence of his neighbor; the reviler, cursing and abusing and lying on his neighbor; the drunkard, wallowing in the mud and poisoning his neighbor with strong drink: these are all vile sinners. But in the light of the Bible, in the eye of God, in the glow of the Holy Spirit's work among the real churches of Christ, the covetous man is as vile as any of them. When churches and ministers of the gospel are true to the first faith of the Christians in this serious matter, public opinion will quit fawning before the covetous, and frown down upon them with indignation or pity.

"But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be even named among you as becometh saints, nor filthiness, nor foolish talking. For this ye know of a surety, no fornicator nor unclean

¹Mark 7: 21f.

²Rom. 1: 18f.

³1 Cor. 5: 1f.

person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."¹

3. *Covetousness Compared with Adultery.*

As we have seen, covetousness is, all through the New Testament, classed with the blackest sins of mankind. Now let us make a specific comparison; put it up side by side with adultery, the filthiest and most repugnant sin in the public eye. In this contrast, we shall not be prudish; we shall not mince words. With the lance of reason, we will cut as close to the bottom of both these pollutions as we can cut.

The sexual and the possessive instincts both have their place in human life. One is for the vital propagation of the race; the other is for the physical support of the race. One of these in excess is adultery; the other without restraint is covetousness.

We must train the soul of the Christian to class stewardship of property with the purity of virtue. Adultery is prostitution of sex. Covetousness is prostitution of possession. Virtue is instinctive in the pure; so stewardship must be made. Adultery is misuse of the organs of young life. Covetousness is misuse of the things that support all life.

Adultery brings in its train broken families, illegitimate births, syphilitic children, childless homes. But covetousness brings in its cargo business exploitation, robbery and murder for money, loss of confidence among men, class hatreds, the Capital and Labor struggle, revolution, race suicide; and finally it brings on the most degraded immorality known to human beings, commercialized adultery. The lewd, loud, despairing, dying prostitute is the finishing touch that covetousness puts upon adultery.

The covetous man who holds and wastes for his own enjoyment enough of this world's goods to feed

¹Eph. 5: 3-5.

and shelter and clothe and train the children of seven families, the lecherous viper who keeps seven barren women for his own gratification are twin-born scoundrels, who both alike and in equal guilt instead of raising one family, are cutting off the life of seven families.

In a town there lived two women: one was frugal, industrious, covetous; the other was trustful, industrious, amorous. One was married, left a widow without children, grew rich in keeping a boarding house, lived a life above reproach, built a hotel, became the strongest financier of the community; one day when approached for a contribution for her church she grinned and snapped: "Money, more money, my money! Don't annoy me with your everlasting begging." The other woman loved and trusted too soon. She was forsaken before she was married. She was left alone to support the child of her shame. She wore away her life at the washtub until her son was educated. One of these women lived in the finest house in the center of the little town; the other in a cabin just out of town in the edge of the woods almost in want, avoided and frowned upon by her neighbors. But in God's sight, which one of these women is the worse sinner? Infinitely, the former, the prosperous woman. For she lived her whole life going deeper into sin; she never repented. Such seldom repent. But the poor outcast sinned—once. She repented bitterly. She did not live in sin. Her sin was a sin of weakness. Covetousness is peculiarly the sin of the strong and the fortunate. That's what makes it so fatal.

In one of the New Testament churches there was a skunk of a scoundrel who ran away with his father's wife; committed incest with her.¹ Is that scandal enough for you? It is so bad, it actually has a whiff

¹ 1 Cor. 5.

of the modern daily in it. A case for the police court, good slops for the yellow journal. An outrage of decency! Yet Paul in writing to this church at Corinth gave specific instructions that put the covetous man in exactly the same class with this adulterer. Does our modern world put covetousness this low? Well, it will when the New Testament is allowed to shine into our ethics with full light.

4. Covetousness Is Idolatry Itself.

Trace covetousness to the bottom; it is idolatry. Paul, with incisive insight into the souls of men, speaks of a "covetous man who is an idolater"¹ and of "covetousness which is idolatry."² Now we are at the nadir of sin.

There are two sides to covetousness: I cannot use or even claim a thing as absolutely mine without, for the time being, becoming absolutely its. The moment I surrender myself to enjoy anything as though there were no God and no other man but myself, the thing that I seek to enjoy becomes my god.

"Woe to him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise. Shall this teach?"³

The last leap of covetousness is the effort of man to own a god for himself. This is rank heathenism; the heathen think they own their gods; they sometimes whip them, if they do not grant what they request of them. "Mammon," cries the generous heart out of all ages, "is the basest of known gods, even of known devils," declared Thomas Carlyle.

Covetousness would take the world away from God; would bribe God, if it could; would kill Jesus Christ. It says: "This is the heir; come let us kill him, and have the inheritance."⁴

¹Eph. 5: 5.

²Col. 3: 5.

³Hab. 2: 19.

⁴Matt. 21: 38.

Oh, could I picture out in full effect
Of the soul-withering power of idolatry,
I'd write a page which whoso dared to read,
His eyes, instead of tears, in crimson drops should
 bleed.

Covetousness is twice prohibited in the Ten Commandments; it is put into the blackest company among sins of the New Testament; it is as foul as adultery; it is of the very essence of idolatry itself. It is no cosmetic for our times; it is a cancer rooted in the vitals of our age. It is—

III. THE TAPROOT SIN

Mowing it off will not do any good. We must dig to the roots.

1. *The Root of Evil.*

“For the love of money is a root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”¹

Love of money is covetousness. Love of money is simply the possessive instinct turned loose. Love of anything that money will buy is degrading. The Christian is to love only those things which money will not buy; what money can buy is to be used, not loved. When a man begins to live for anything that can be bought with money, his soul is sold.

To kill the tree of evil,
Do not bother leaves and fruits,
But cut the trunk, dig to the roots.
Go after covetousness.

2. *The Brood-Sow of Popular Sins.*

The sins that ruin the most people are the popular sins. No sin damages many people until it becomes

¹ Tim. 6: 10.

popular. It hurts only a few weak individuals, while it is under the ban of public opinion; it begins to ruin society when it becomes popular.

And no sin becomes popular, but that some covetous person or corporation or class makes money out of it. Most of our social sins are popularized by the propaganda paid for by the covetous who get profit from them. No bad thing can prosper, unless some covetous party gets pay for the damage that it does to mankind.

The whiskey traffic is an outstanding example of this fact. The vicious in the moving picture survives because covetousness in the film business panders to the lowest demands in the people that it can kindle and stimulate and supply. So with the bad in the theater, and in the press. Sunday trains run because there is money in them for somebody. If there were no profits in Sunday work, it would all be discontinued in a very few weeks. Worldliness and luxury are provided for by organized covetousness. The Secretary of the Treasury of the United States estimates that in 1919, 20 per cent of our national income was spent for luxuries; that means \$12,260,000,000 worse than wasted for things that hurt us.¹ Covetousness caused this; covetous buyers, covetous sellers, covetous manufacturers, covetous consumers. Thus covetousness in peace may cost as much as covetousness in war. Mammon is no better god than Mars.

Worldliness is just another name for covetousness, for selfish waste of property; violation of the principles of stewardship; the lie of ownership run mad into extravagance.

3. *The Root of the Perils of Our Civilization.*

Some of the maladies of our collapsing civilization are dominance of things over persons, godless

¹Bert Wilson, *A Christian and His Money Problems*, p. 68.

materialism; the white man's exploiting system reaching out after the markets, raw materials, and cheap labor of backward peoples of the earth; the struggle between Capital and Labor, a class-war growing fiercer with every advance in civilization, the spirit of war, each nation worshipping some animal, eagle, lion, or bear as the symbol of its own power and using it for getting and holding more of the world's goods. The whole litter of these maladies of the modern world is bred and fed in the nasty hen-coop of covetousness. From this brooding and feeding place they grow into monsters and go out with wings strong enough to carry them to the ends of the earth, and with claws strong enough to tear the world to pieces. And that's not all: they keep it torn up. They all come from covetousness.

The supremacy of things over the souls of men, the dead blight of materialism, comes from making the possession of things, the passion of ownership, the end of life. This is covetousness. The white man's exploiting system seeking to gulp down the bulk of the business of mankind comes from the desire to have more. It is the spiritual disease of pleonexia, the mania for more. This is racial covetousness in white peoples. The conflict between Capital and Labor is a struggle to the death between classes to get more material goods from each other in the economic processes. It is a class-covetousness so blind that it sees only what is already produced, and so selfish that it fights tigerishly for all possible of that. It is class-covetousness that has no thought of what could be produced beyond all the present needs of man, if all classes of men would only join together in banning the luxuries that ruin men, and in voluntary, enthusiastic, co-operative production of everything that is good for men.

The spirit of war is the concentration of individual, class, national, racial covetousness. War is murder, and murder started at the first altar of religion where a covetous man had brought a false offering to God.¹ Abel brought the fat first-born of his flocks; but Cain was too covetous to bring the best firstfruits of his fields; there war on earth began in the first recorded murder. Covetousness begat hate in the soul of a pretending worshiper; that hate broke out into murder; that murder multiplied becomes war. Covetousness is the root-cause of war.

Covetousness is the root of our popular sins and the taproot of the perils of our civilization. But that is not the worst thing yet about covetousness: it exudes a sickening sweet perfume that anesthetizes religion, an opiate for faith, ether for worship, chloroform for love, a laughing gas for Christian joy, a refrigerator for consciences, a killer of churches.

"They build up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity, the heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money. And yet they lean upon Jehovah and say, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us! No evil shall come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field and Jerusalem shall become heaps."²

Covetousness sometimes takes entire charge of religious activity. That's what had happened in the Temple at Jerusalem when Jesus came to it. Its cleansing was a shock to the covetous leaders in it. Are we really less commercialized to-day about the equipment of our churches than were the Jews about the business of the Temple?

There is no use to be chopping at the popular sins of our day. They may make a beautiful lawn or

¹Gen. 4: 1f.

²Micah 3: 10-12.

hedge; but it does not prepare any soil for the seed of the kingdom. Plow the ground deep. Subsoil it. It does harm to blunt the perils of our civilization. It gives false security. Both the popular sins of our day and the recognized perils of our civilization are rank sprouts, vigorous outgrowths of our general dead-level covetousness. Dig after the root; pull up its taproot. That's the only sure remedy.

Our churches, waked from the long sleep of the anesthesia of covetousness and hitched to the taproot sin of the age, must be energized by the original power of Christianity and transformed into God Almighty's stump-pullers. Then let the word be given! This will tear up the ground clear down to the rocks. But it will prepare the soil for the most blessed sowing of the seeds of righteousness and the greatest harvest of the fruits of righteousness the world has ever known. We must now use for covetousness

IV. THE RADICAL CURE

We have temporized long enough in our treatment of it. Palliatives sicken. We all tire of being tickled with soft feathers. When we realize our condition is really serious, we welcome the keen lancet. It is now full time to quit

1. *The Malpractices of the Past.*

Ministers and churches can not be brought into earthly courts and tried for malpractice in dealing with sin, like physicians and hospitals in dealing with diseases. It is a pity. For we may have to answer at the judgment seat of Christ for our guilt in dealing out false remedies to the souls of covetous people.

First of all, we have been guilty of *criminal negligence* in the treatment of covetousness. We have been careless in diagnosis. We have allowed it to pass as

thrift, as economy, as saving, as prosperity, as provision for a rainy day, as foresight for family, as preparation for an easy old age, as mere love of the business game. All these, or any of these, mostly good in themselves, may be symptoms of a fatal, deadly ailment of the soul. Nowhere are appearances so deceptive as in cases of covetousness.

Then with a proper diagnosis, we often neglect the case. We never tell the poor, freezing, dying soul his true condition. We pet him and flatter him with pleasing words about his success and prosperity. We evade the covetous. We avoid the issue with them in the financial plans of our churches and let them live year by year in the damning delusion that their possessions are their very own, as if there were no God, never doing their part in the support of the work of their church and of the kingdom throughout the world. We fail to have frank, private talk and earnest closet prayer with them about the deceiving, delicate sin that is destroying their souls. For our part, they may die without ever knowing that they are smitten with a disease of the soul fatal as murder, foul as adultery and paralyzing as idolatry. How shall we, after a ministry so faithless, meet the great Physician with our neglected patients?

But if the stricken souls awake to the deadliness of covetousness and cry out in anguish for relief, we try to quiet them. We lull them to sleep again, if we can.

We rub on *palliative ointments*. This is criminal. Covetousness kills. Instead of curing it, we try to give an easy death. We administer euthanasia of soul for it.

One palliative we use is to encourage the patient to feel that his possessions are his own to be used just as he pleases. Another soothing palliative, we tell covetous men that they are entitled to all the laws of

the land and the rules of business allow them; that it is theirs in every settlement with their fellowmen and that they can use it as they please. Thus we rub a deadening lie into the lacerated souls of many of our successful Christian business men.

We make men forget the smartings of their consciences, by allowing them to dole out to God's work pittance from their abundance, and then thanking them loudly and truculently for their apparent liberality. This makes them feel easy about their covetousness; but it makes them, deep down in their souls, despise us and our calling as ministers of the gospel, for demanding so little of them for our great God, Father of all souls and Owner of all things.

Another way we deaden the pain of conscious covetousness is to share with the covetous their use of goods. A pastor may mollify the covetousness of his congregation by living a luxurious life with them, residing in a palatial home, or riding in an elaborate car, or feasting continually with them at delicate tables in material gratification that deadens his own soul and the souls of them he is pretending to treat for the distemper of covetousness.

We palliate the pangs of the covetous by assuring them that we are living in an age that requires a high standard of living and that the Christian has to live like the rest of the world in order to get along with it. All such loose talk is simply the treason of a priestly ministry of Jesus in a materialistic age. It dilutes the demands of Jesus that a man must give all in order to become even a disciple.¹ It surrenders outright the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It declares that modern economics is always to be mightier than the kingdom of God. Ye can not serve God and Mammon.

But there is another malpractice in cases of covetousness: *Violent pounding of the patient:*

¹ Luke 14: 33.

That is, we abuse the covetous. That does no good. But it is popular preaching in some places. Superficial treatments of radical evils are often popular. The covetous are held up to ridicule. We declaim against their sins. We hit them hard. We show no mercy. We hold them up to public execration. We make successful people unpopular. We try to beat the sin of covetousness out of their hearts with our fists and clubs.

This gets nowhere. It adds resentment to their covetousness. It runs them off from the churches. It makes them feel that we are envious. It misrepresents the spirit and the teachings of Jesus.

Criminal negligence, palliative ointments, violent poundings for covetousness, these are the malpractices of the past. Now for the true treatment:

2. *Economia is the Antidote for all Covetousness.*

In other words, the Christian stewardship of all wealth is the one dose for it.

We sat in a large audience. The speaker was talking to us about the darkness of covetousness. He had the lights turned off. It was pitch dark. Then the speaker said, "I will stop long enough to drive out the dark, if I can." He stamped the floor. He pounded the desk with his hands. He beat the wall with a club. He yelled with each lick, "Dark, get out of this room—get out, you ugly dark!" But it was still dark.

He stamped and pounded and beat louder, yelling with each stroke, "Dark, get out!" It seemed to us our speaker had gone crazy. Then above the noise of the man trying to drive out the dark, we heard the voice of a child in the rear of the room saying, "Mister, turn on the electric switch; when the light comes on, the dark will get out itself." Then there was the swish of a switch, and the light flashed on and all the dark was gone.

Then the speaker laughed at us: "You thought I was mad; I knew I could not drive out the dark with my feet or fists or with a club. I had told the child to tell me to turn on the light. We were acting a parable."

We cannot drive off the darkness of covetousness by abusing people about it. All we need to do is to turn on the truth in the hearts of the people.

Covetousness is simply the sin that grows out of the lie of man's ownership of property. Just get it reasserted and re-established in the consciences of men that God is still the absolute, eternal Owner of all property, and immediately covetousness flees away as fast as darkness flees out of a room before the spread of light from an electric connection.

Profanity is forgetting that God is in our language. Sabbath desecration is a negation of God's right to our time. Murder is a disowning of God's love in life. Adultery is a disavowal of God's work in sex. Covetousness is a denial of God's ownership in property. The radical cure of all these sins is a fresh sense of God in our souls.

Covetousness, often disguised as a virtue, a damning sin, the taproot sin of our age, can be cured only by an experience of God that sets up his rights forever in our souls as the Owner of us and of everything that we could call ours. *Economia* is its only cure; house managing for God, stewardship; the conviction that God is our Father, and Jesus Christ is our Brother, and this world itself is one of "many mansions in the Father's house" and that we are in charge of it and of all its contents that we can use for him and his children.

Heaven's prescription for covetousness: *Economia*; God's ownership, the Christian's stewardship. A genuine experience of it is an instantaneous cure.

Take it—not externally—but internally. Don't rub it on: put it inside. It's not paint; it's medicine. Do not daub it on in spots; take it into the heart. Broken doses of it are nauseating. It is a killing dose, unless enough of it is taken to cure.

Economia, stewardship, is not an economic theory or an ideal for Christians to admire. It is a religious experience that is to be so gotten into the soul that it reorganizes all our thinking and feeling in economics, that it changes our business lives. When it really gets into our souls, they absorb and digest and transform into spiritual value houses, lands, cows, furniture, money, horses, daily wages, hogs, capital stock, automobiles and everything else useful and necessary in this material life, just like our bodies turn beef-steak, apples, bread, eggs, pork, butter, nuts, sugar and all food into living blood and thinking brain.

Economia, compounded of two truths, God's ownership and man's stewardship, is the medicine. No slight smelling and tasting of it; no rubbing with it. Eat it. Drink it. Breathe it. Get it into the blood of the soul. It is heaven's iron for earthly materialism.

The development of the economic impulse of New Testament Christianity, or economia, is now a modern necessity. For without it, our civilization collapses. Without it, the Christian world program shrivels and fails for lack of financial support. Without it, our modern Christianity itself threatens to succumb to covetousness in a civilization now dedicated in its economic activities almost entirely to Mammon.

CHAPTER VI

MODERN NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES



THE development of the economic phase of Christianity is to be the outstanding feature of our times. This is becoming clearer every day. This economic development of Christianity cannot be centralized; yet it cannot become general among Christians without—

I. CENTERS FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT

This development has been held back for the lack of proper axes for it in the past. It cannot be nucleated in any center foreign to actual experience accessible to ordinary Christians. Here has been a trouble in all past attempts to carry vital Christianity into the economic order of men. Since the first generation or two from the beginning, every effort to develop the economic phase of Christianity has been around

1. *False Centers.*

The first false center that wrecked the economic development of Christianity was religious authority centralized outside of and above Christian local churches.

(1) *Ecclesiastical power:* With what has already been said about the Roman Catholic autocracy as a hindrance to this development in the Middle Ages, it remains to say that an ecclesiastical power of any kind interferes with it in our time. It can tax its adherents and thus harden in them the delusion that they own their possessions. But it cannot stimulate in people an experience of God that makes them voluntarily share this world's goods with their brothers in

fellowship and co-operation. Any denomination of Christians ruled by bishop, or council, or conference, or even convention, or compactly organized in any form for its work, is in peril of trying to become an ecclesiastical center for the economic development of Christianity. The day it succeeds in becoming such a center, its day of leadership over a spiritual constituency is gone. It becomes master.

(2) *Civil Authority*: Likewise, as has already been seen, state government is another false center for the economic development of pure religion. For it can not raise nor disburse money, except by law and force; it is helpless in the realm of freewill where religion works. It can deal only with the mechanism of economics; the mainsprings of religious motive are out of its reach entirely. To Christianize economics, the state church has the combined weakness of both an ecclesiastical power and a state government, for it is a hybrid of the two.

Ecclesiasticisms, state governments, and state churches all stand upon forced co-operations among men, and therefore can never become central causes of voluntary and free co-operation among Christians. Yet until recently practically all effort at the development of the economic phase of Christianity has been headed up in one or the other of these three sham centers of religious activity.

With all these finally discredited as pretended economic centers of religion, there is beginning to rise in modern times another pretentious center ready to usurp control of the economic force of Christianity.

(3) *The Big Business Idea*: This is a real peril to modern Christianity. It is the shadow of the Standard Oil Company, the United Steel Corporation, the Ford Motor Company, and other like great business organizations, falling across the field of religious endeavor. Its motto is, "Business in religion." It is

economics swallowing Christianity, instead of Christianity digesting economics. Our mission boards and colleges and Christian universities are in danger of falling into this snare. The Inter-Church World Movement once threatened to become the climax of this tendency. The most democratic of our Christian denominations are now in peril of selling out free Christianity to their own necessary business organizations.

The economic phase of free Christianity can not be concentrated in any one center; it must rather be liberated from many centers.

2. *True Centers.*

No ecclesiasticism, nor state, nor state-church, nor big business corporation, nor any denominational headquarters, but *the local Christian churches are centers for this development.*

God set them into human society as the centers of a new life; they are God's transforming stations for the whole world, for the whole life of the world; they are God's lights shining in the midst of a Christless economic order. When once they are doing their full work, they will be sources and centers for the economic support of all voluntary co-operative effort for the transformation of the earth.

The local churches have all necessary equipment to become the centers of the world's economic life. They have regular meeting places for the people; they have trained preachers and teachers and leaders, or can have them; they have the ear of worshiping congregations, the most plastic and impressible state of human life; they now have auditoriums for throngs of people and teaching rooms for small groups of people; they have all these advantages under conditions

favorable for a direct, unanimous, miraculous experience of the people generally that would make them know in their souls that they are not the owners of property, but before God, only temporary possessors of it in the highest interest of all concerned. Back to the experience of the first local church; then forward into the full use of all the equipment of our modern local churches! That's the route for us to go now.

In the development of the economic phase of Christianity there are just three elements: God, people, property. The primary elements are God and the people. Property is a spark-plug between them screwed down into its place in the economic world; but it flashes with spiritual significance when God and the people meet in the power of the Spirit in a church.

Yes; that's it! Property a spark-plug! Forget that it is God's and it is then just a dead plug without the spark. That's what it is in most of our churches today; there is no ignition; dead engines. But let God's finger touch as his very own the property we possess, and instantly it is electrified with heavenly power; it glows; it sparkles; it works with the light of a new age. This is an economic experience of God. Where it comes, it vitalizes a man, a church. This is the strange power that set property ablaze with new meaning in the first church. In nearly every local church, there are a few consecrated souls in whom this view of property already faintly glows as a live coal in the ashes; we need to give it a chance to blaze into bonfires in whole churches. Wherever there is just a spark and fuel, there is possibility of a great fire. That's the way our next great revival is to come.

These considerations drive us back into a study of *the New Testament churches*.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES

For they were all local churches,¹ and in them there was at work the only dynamic that can do this work in the churches of our day.

The New Testament churches were more than mere organizations,

1. *They Were Organisms.*

But what is the difference between an organization and an organism?

Let us illustrate: What if you were to look at that cotton mill out yonder and see sparks falling out of its smoke-stack into the ground and sprouting little cotton mills all over town? Suppose these little cotton mills wriggled around until they were grown, and then that the sparks from them should fall into the soil and start another crop of cotton mills. Let this go on till our whole continent is covered with a forest of cotton mills! Well, a cotton mill could never do that; but a cotton plant does it. Somebody has discovered a species of cotton plant that has grown all over the South—what if some smart fellow should invent a kind of cotton mill that would scatter its seed all over the country and grow crop after crop of cotton mills? What's the difference between a cotton mill and a cotton plant?—just exactly the difference between an organization and an organism.

Did you hear of that wonderful automobile? It did not have to have a chauffeur; it steered itself. It never needed to be carried to a garage; when it got into a wreck all that was necessary was to drive it under a shelter; there it gradually repaired itself, while it rested for a little while. It knew where the filling station was, and always went there and blew its horn just before its gasoline gave out. Now and

¹*Churches of New Testament*, by George W. McDaniel, p. 296, Table on *Ecclesia*; also *Ecclesia, Church*, by B. H. Carroll.

then it became the mother of another little automobile. Do you believe a word of this? No car ever did or ever can do any of these things. Yet a common old cow does every one of them so naturally that nothing is said about it. She needs no driver; when wounded she gets well herself; when hungry she knows where the feeding place is and goes there and lows until she is fed. She is the mother of other cows.

A local Christian church is an organism; not a mere organization. This distinction is not abstraction to anybody who knows the fundamental differences between a Ford car and a milch cow. The difference between a car and a cow!—why, one is dead, the other is alive; one is a mechanical organization, the other is a living organism. Man made the car; God made the cow.

Each New Testament church was a living body; not made like the cow out of beef and hide and hair and horns and hoofs; but made of the immortal souls of men and women saved by the blood of Christ, born of the Spirit and built by him into a living body: "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul."

Do these illustrations seem crude? Well, foundation stones are usually rough. This is fundamental: An organization has to be handled from the outside; it has no life of its own; an organism is a live thing, self-directing, self-feeding, self-repairing, self-reproducing, self-organizing.

That New Testament churches were organisms really alive we know for several reasons:

(1) *The terms used in the Scriptures to describe and define churches show them to be organisms.*

They are described as living, growing houses. Jesus, speaking to Peter after his famous confession of the Christ, says, "Upon this rock my church I will build as a house," if the full Greek import of the verb is

brought out. "Jesus Christ, himself, being the chief cornerstone (of the church at Ephesus)¹ in whom each several building fitly framed together groweth into a temple of the Lord in whom ye are builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit." "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God?" We "as living stones," says Peter,² "are built up a spiritual house." What more vivid picture could be given of an organism than a house alive? Churches are houses not made with hands, nor of brick and mortar; but self-erected out of the free souls of saved men.

There is no nearer synonym for our modern word organism in the New Testament than the word "body." Again and again that is used to describe the churches of Christ. "So we, who are many, are one body in Christ."³ "There be neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; for ye are all one (body) in Christ."⁴ Christ is spoken of as "the head from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God."⁵

Again wife and bride are used as symbols of the churches in the New Testament.⁶ A growing house, a living body, a wife, could either of these be less than an organism? That was a great hour when dead dust stood up in a living man. That is a greater hour when free men stand together in a living church.

(2) *We see that the churches are organisms in the fact that their origin is hid in the mystery of life.*

We have a way of saying a certain day a certain church was organized. It would be nearer the truth to say that on that day its members formally declared its existence. If a man, wooing his sweetheart,

¹Eph. 2: 21.

²1 Peter 2: 5.

³Rom. 12: 5.

⁴Gal. 3: 28.

⁵Col. 2: 19.

⁶Rev. 22: 17; Eph. 5: 28, 29.

were to say, "Let us organize a family," she would certainly discard him. No; he just vows his love and asks her to love him. Their souls come into deep, mysterious union; this soul union is the invisible beginning of a family. Churches are not organized; like families, they grow. The church and the family are both organic human groups.

It is no accident that we can not put finger on just the place and time that the first church started. It was a living thing and all living things have invisible beginnings.

"Where two or three"—the smallest possible number of souls that can meet—"are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them": this is the germinal principle of each church.

(3) *The existence of churches as organisms is established by the New Testament insistence that all their members shall be born again.*

Dead things can be put into organizations; but they cannot be made parts of organisms. The new birth means a new life; there would be no need for the new birth for membership in the churches of Jesus Christ, if there were not in the churches a life which does not exist outside of them. To say that such a life exists in the churches is to say that each church is a body with a life peculiarly its own, a divine organism. When we let up in our contention for a regenerate membership, we surrender the organic existence of the local churches of Jesus Christ.

(4) *The fact that a church is an organism is set forth in the New Testament ordinances for the church.*

The church ordinances are not things; they are acts. Baptism is not water; it is the act of going into it and coming out of it. The Lord's Supper is not bread and wine; it is the act of eating and drinking them. Water stagnates, bread grows stale, wine evaporates;

they are mere things. But these two acts can be performed just as long as living souls come into living obedience to a living Lord. They cannot be continued apart from life. The church whose nature they set forth is not a lifeless organization; it is a living organism.

(5) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the churches makes them organisms.

"Know ye not that ye are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"¹ In our churches we are "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."² If a church is a body of the Spirit, then the Spirit must be the soul of a church; a body with a soul, a soul with a body; that is an organism. Seven times, our Lord, risen from the dead, capped with the glory of the sun, speaking with the voice of many waters, repeated, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches."³ He who can hear the Spirit speaking to the churches is God's ear-piece in human society. The churches are organisms; for they are organs of the Spirit.

We need not be uneasy about the final Christian conquest of the world so long as there is one genuine, organic, local church on earth. There was a time when there was only one, the first at Jerusalem. It was wedged in tight between Judaism and Paganism. The world was in concert to crush it. Persecution scattered it, and only multiplied it. It penetrated the whole Roman world. There is possibility of a world-wide crop of any living thing so long as there is just one sound seed of its kind left on our planet.

¹1 Cor. 3: 16.

²Eph. 2: 22.

³Rev. 2.

New Testament local churches are no exception to this principle. If New Testament churches were organisms, then

2. Each Church Was Independent.

They were not governed from without; they were self-disciplining. The independence of each church grows out of its nature and its rights as an organism. Local churches are independent only for the sake of the life inherent in each of them separately. This spiritual life in each church must be left free to express itself in its own way. No outside interference must be let into this central kernel of organic spiritual vitality. When the organized inter-church work of the churches disregards the distinct life of each church, the bark encroaches upon the pith of the tree. Gnawing and death follow.

Each church has an integrity of its own as inviolable as the personality of each of its members. There is a distance between the existences of different churches as definite as the distance between the souls of different men. This distance must be kept wide open. When it gets closed up, Christian liberty is gone, real church life is smothered, and Christianity gets caked into gummy ecclesiasticism.

Each church has a life of its own. It does not have to live on anything borrowed. It must reserve to itself forever the right to throw off anything foreign to its nature or hostile to its purpose. This is the divine right of a divine life within each church; a church is a live thing built up not out of cells of flesh; it is the souls of men grown together in a spiritual reality.

Independence! Ah, now we have struck a treacherous path. We must realize that independence for its own sake is a farce. Independence is not the goal of Christian endeavor. Independence is not in-

herent in the local church; but it is a necessary, absolutely necessary, condition for the development of the inherent organic life of a local church.

The right to independence is the severest test that can be put upon the quality and vitality of a church. The churches of many Christian denominations are so bottled up by external government that we do not know what their real odor is. Everybody may know the smell of an independent local church that has sufficient vitality to produce any kind of a flavor.

The independence of a local church, fundamentally understood, is simply the right of a living thing to live out its own life, to respond to any impact coming upon it from the outside, and to respond in accordance with the principles and impulses of its own nature. To illustrate: Disturb a lark; he rises into the air and joins the other birds in a song. Touch a rattlesnake: he thinks of nothing but to strike back with a poisonous fang. The bird and the snake both are only using their independence. The peril of free democratic Christianity is that we may have rattlesnake churches; they prefer to live in cemeteries; they stay coiled up most of the time; they seldom uncoil, except to strike; they always strike with deadly mistrust of any agency that may be brought into play for co-operative work among churches.

Churches have no right to be independent except for the sake of the divine life within them. They have no right to live that divine life within them, except for the sake of the dead world without; that is, if they are true to their Head, who gave his life for those who were dead. Away with this notion of local church independence that cartoons itself in continual kicking against co-operation and progress. But to preserve and enlarge the life within them and to quicken the dead outside of them, our local churches

must be kept organically independent until the kingdom comes.

If such were the nature and functions of churches in the beginnings of Christian history, we shall have to turn to

III. NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES IN MODERN TIMES for the economic liberation of Christianity.

There are thousands of churches that essentially, though feebly, resemble the New Testament churches. They conform to New Testament forms, and they have the spirit and the outlook of the New Testament. They are not ecclesiastically bound together; they are not supported by the state; they are democratic; they hold to the New Testament ordinances; some of them yearn to be led by the Holy Spirit. Whether these churches have always existed in historic succession from the days of Jesus Christ to this day, or whether they spring up spontaneously upon every close, prayerful study of the New Testament, we are not concerned. The point is, there are now such churches.

And it is in this type of churches in our day that the development of the economic phase of original Christianity will have to be centered. Centered anywhere else, this development will ultimately be only another enslavement of the human spirit in a system.

But the organic, independent, local churches of the present confront a vastly different situation from that of New Testament times.

1. *In the first place the work of a local church can now be no longer localized.*

Men now living on the other side of the globe are more accessible to our help than were some of the Greek widows living on back streets of the city to some members of the Jerusalem church. The most humble local church is now in automobile-touch, phone-touch, train-touch, ship-touch, aero-touch,

wire-touch, wireless-touch, radio-touch with the "utmost part of the earth."

Yet while the work of a local church cannot be localized, if Christianity is to remain free, the control of that church is to be kept absolutely local. For the task of winning this world to Christ is, from one angle, simply a question of getting the whole race of men to hold together on the same principles that saved souls stay together and work together in free local churches. World democracy will continue to whirl to pieces in centrifugal confusion, until it finds its cohesive principles; these cohesive principles are already revealed to us in the workings of a local New Testament church.

2. Again, the world far and near, is now becoming so compactly organized that independent churches have to realize their interdependence.

If there were only one independent local church in the world, it could at least stand alone. But if there are as many as two such churches, they must stand together. Two churches cannot be dependent upon the same Saviour without being interdependent between themselves. That's true of two churches even on opposite sides of the globe: much more acutely true is it of hundreds and thousands of such churches in the same country, or even in the same state.

You have heard of the little boy who said he had found an impossibility for God: "He cannot make two mountains side by side without putting a valley between them." Well, could he? Say it reverently, not even God could make churches independent without making them interdependent. The independence of our churches is the pledge of their vitality and democracy; their interdependence is their call to world-wide co-operation.

The life of man was once very simple; organization was useless then. But now the world is so complex

that life cannot be preserved without organization. Men are now trained into specialized intelligence and skill; they cannot live apart. Large machinery has been brought into operation; human beings must work together now in large systems; else starve, or be cut to pieces. Huge corporations, vast business organizations have come to stay; they are taking charge of the world's affairs in every line. Even the chewing gum business is now internationally organized.

Christianity has fostered this wholesale correlation and organization of life. The cross is the mother of modern larger organization. It makes men's spirits long for great achievements. It represses and extirpates selfishness. It teaches brotherhood. It builds a basis for confidence in the souls of men. It melts their hearts into common emotions. It sets up unifying contagions among men. The world is now organized and organizing through and through.

The vitality of our churches cannot be kept intact without their independence. Their continued independence hangs upon the practicableness of their interdependence upon one another. Our churches interdependent are huddled together in an organized age. This is the present situation. The outcome of it only God knows.

3. New Testament times were hostile to the churches; our times are friendly to them.

Then every church was planted in the midst of opposition. They stood for a new order of things. All organized religion opposed them. It was a life-and-death wrestle with Judaism and Paganism. The strong arm of the government was invoked to crush them. Yet the churches shone out against the general corruption of society and against sin in high places; they flamed forth in uncompromising enthusiasm for the truth. This still more embittered the opposition to them. They had no influential voices to plead

their cause in court. Fire and faggot, jail, exile, rack, martyrdom became their portion. The cross, tool of the cruelest and most humiliating death that criminals could die, became their ensign and banner.

Now the times invite the churches. Public opinion is with them. Their members are in the seats of the mighty. Governments protect them. The whole world is open to them. Their influence is courted in parliament and court and political convention. In the meantime, the churches have compromised their original purity.

On the whole the situation is infinitely better now than in the first years of the churches. Our Christianity is toned down from what it was; but our times are toned up from what they were. The churches once shone with mid-day brightness; and the world shrouded them in mid-night darkness. But now it is no longer either mid-day or mid-night; it is twilight. The light has lost its intensity, but it is further diffused out into the dark, and there is less of darkness. But may not this twilight last too long? We need the clear, warm sunlight again.

The churches already established in our civilization are now challenged to advance and carry civilization with them. To do this they must shine out with a light as far in advance of these times as the New Testament churches were in advance of the ancient times of Rome. This will save the churches and our age. The supreme need of our times is for the churches to throw as clear light on the economic world as the first churches threw on the religious world. The trouble is we have been thinking of Christianity exclusively as a religion: it is vastly more than a religion; it is God's salvation of everything of value to human life. In it, God is saving souls of men for another world; but he is using these saved souls to save this present world. This is the

full program of Christianity: the churches have come thus far on only the first part of the program. The key-verse of the gospel does not say, "God so loved *souls* that he gave his only begotten Son," but God so loved the *world* that he gave his Son.

Let saved souls now begin in dead earnest to save this material world to uses of God's kingdom on earth. That is the next step: it is the stewardship of all the earthly possessions of saved souls; it is Christian economics, *economia*. God in the first Christian local church marvelously included this part of the Christian program in an experience of the use of property so spectacular as to rivet the attention of Christian thought throughout all the after-ages.

In the light of this observation, let us study and pray long in the Yellowstone Park of the New Testament, especially around its Economic Geyser in Acts 4: 31 to 5: 11 till our hearts feel the swell of the hidden energy of the new time now near upon us in the work of the churches. Do not do this, however, unless you are willing to pay the price of having a vision necessary for a leader of the churches in these times. For the vision of a redeemed physical earth can be rounded out on the inside of this experience of the first church.

4. *The churches of the New Testament were poor in the goods of this world; our modern churches are fabulously rich and confront abounding wealth.*

The Poverty of New Testament Times: In the early days of the Christian era, men had not learned to produce wealth. They worked singly and by hand; organization and machinery had not come into the producing processes. The hand-made wealth of those times was a mere trifle compared to the accumulations of our times piled up by machinery; and the most of the little they had in New Testament times was in the hands of a very few. The majority of the

population of the Roman empire were hirelings and slaves, and the few rich used men and women instead of tools to create their luxuries.

And generally the Christians were the poorest of the poor, for at first Christianity did not enter the upper strata of society. It got its response from the educators who were not wealthy, often slaves even, and from the middle and lower classes of society who were very poor, using borrowed or rented houses, or open fields, or caves and catacombs for their meeting places. The church at Jerusalem, located in a religious center and capital, composed of people largely ostracised for their faith, giving itself in joyous abandonment to the worship of God the Father and Owner of all, occupied in the distribution and consumption of wealth already accumulated instead of producing more, was in the direst of poverty.

Paul received less for his service as apostle in planting and tending churches all over the known world of that time than many a janitor in a modest church now receives for attending to one church building.

This general poverty kept New Testament churches down against reality; prevented their becoming artificial and arrogant. Without the incidental prestige of superior material possessions, they had to face the world around them and depend entirely upon the drawing power of the naked gospel to open the way for them; they could offer no false or selfish inducements to men for professing Christ and coming into their membership. There were in all this some spiritual advantages to the early churches.

In the present collapsed condition of Europe we have a suitable stage set for the rehearsal of the work of the New Testament churches under economic conditions somewhat similar to those of New Testament times. If the prosperous parts of Christendom will now do their full duty in giving necessary economic

support of free local democratic churches of the New Testament type in the destitute areas of Europe, we may expect a rebound from them that will greatly help in a revival of original Christianity throughout the modern world.

The Increasing Wealth of Our Times: Despite all the destruction and paralysis of the Great War in parts of the earth, there never has been on the whole an age so wealthy as ours. Even the emergencies of war have increased the wealth-producing capacity of mankind, for they have forced us into wider, more compact and more efficient organization, and into the application of sciences in agriculture and manufacturing for the production of those things necessary in the support of armies and navies and civilian populations during the struggle. Before the World War we learned only the first letters of the alphabet of production. After the shock of the war is finally over we shall go on into the spelling book. War drives us to thinking of wealth in larger units. It has recently compelled us to speak of billions instead of millions in our common calculations. One more lift, and we shall be speaking in terms of trillions. Suppose we should learn to produce wealth as fast for peace as for war!

Our modern system of traffic is world-wide; it covers all lands; it reaches from Equator to Poles; it climbs to the top of all mountains and dives to the bottom of all seas; yet it has barely begun to gather raw material for our factories. Oil wells, coal mines, and rivers and tides are all surging upward into an ocean of power dammed in behind the drivewheels of our mills. Markets for manufactured articles now stretch across all seas to the remotest country-sides of furthest lands. If our age could keep on speeding up production and do away with war and hold consumption on a basis of vital needs instead of imaginary

wants, real wealth would soon be as plentiful and free among us as water. But as it is, we are producing wealth in large measure simply to kill the bodies of men by machinery in times of war and damn the souls of men in luxury in times of peace. And neither of these misuses of wealth is worse than the other; and both of them are sinful and criminal.

It is in materialistic conditions like these that our modern New Testament churches are placed to assert the eternal supremacy of the spiritual over the material. These churches are just now in graver danger of spiritual extinction in prosperous America than among the hungry peoples of Europe. In this situation, the only salvation of our churches as spiritual saving forces is, not only to get on the aggressive in preaching the gospel they believe to all men, but also to get on the aggressive in pushing the life they are living out into their own immediate material economic surroundings. Both of these aggressives must go together: there cannot be one of them without the other.

The Economic Test of Our Christianity: Since the days of Carey, modern Christians have been, in a limited way, preaching the gospel out beyond the churches. In this blessed work our pace must be quickened. But even this preaching of the gospel will now slacken or stop entirely, if our churches cannot saturate the wealth-producing motives and permeate the wealth-producing methods of Christian people with the spirit and teachings of Jesus as to property. This is the challenge that now tests our churches at home and decides whether they are to continue to shed light abroad.

In an age and country of wealth like ours the supreme proof of the Christian vitality of our churches is their power to lay wealth at the feet of Jesus Christ. The present gravest menace of Christendom is the unconsecrated wealth in possession of the

members of our churches. This is the test: Is our sense of Stewardship capable of proving its genuineness in the Christian use of property? This is the fatal test of Christianity in our age which has exalted economic considerations to supremacy in the affairs of the world.

Real New Testament churches in our modern life are not creatures of circumstance, but they are

5. Creators of Communities.

They do not cower under the shadows of factories and big business corporations. They do not apologize to school-houses and court-houses for their existence. They tower above them all.

They are the creative centers of a new order in the world. The smallest of them, if really alive, is concerned in everything human to the rim of the earth and to the end of eternity. Each of them in its own neighborhood is sovereign in itself; it is open at the top clear up to the throne of God, and in matters of conscience there is no earthly power above it. A local Christian church true to the example of New Testament churches in defying ostracism, persecution, death in their times, will not now barter away itself to an age that patronizes it and flatters it with gifts and beautiful rituals and fine words and modifications of its ordinances and then retreats from its demand upon the human conscience into powerful ecclesiastical organizations, and into worldliness, and godless science and philosophy; it will not let up now on the verge of victory. In the presence of worldly wealth it can in Christ Jesus acknowledge God as Owner of all wealth in a certitude of conviction that rocks to its foundation any economic system that leaves God out of count: it does not fear nor court riches; it quietly restores them to God's uses among men.

Each true church was "born crucified." If a church has too little influence over a community, it

is because the community has too much influence over the church.¹ The churches are witnesses to possibilities that lie beyond the facts. They were never meant to be a mere guaranty of what has become established. That has been their shame in past days. They are more than a religious sanction of the *status quo*. They are to be divine contradictions of existing conditions.² The service a church may render in a day of social change depends upon the degree to which it exalts its prophetic function over its administrative business.³

Each true church is to strive, not only to save lost souls for the next world, but also to bring the whole community around it under sway of the same principles and power and experiences that hold its own members together in a spiritual unity, while they still live in this world. This is the way the kingdom of heaven is to come on earth; it is world conquest in terms of the life and aims of local churches.

Just as the principles, which hold together the individuals of a local New Testament church, are to become the cohesive forces of modern world democracy, so the economic principles of the first New Testament church as manifested in Acts, fourth and fifth chapters, are to become universal in the whole economic system of the modern world. That being the case, it is necessary for the churches of any denomination trying to keep intact the New Testament type of church to be made centers of propaganda and education for the economic principles of original Christianity.

Therefore, the churches are to be the Economic Centers of a New Life among Men:

With the economic interests so numerous, so delicate, so complex, so universal, so mighty in every

¹George W. McDaniel.

²Charles S. McFarland.

³Harry F. Ward.

human life, the churches cannot perform their work for the kingdom of God on earth without becoming economic forces of control just as far as they reach into the living relations of their members. With religion and economics linked so fast together as we saw them in the second chapter, churches can no more be religious centers without being at the same time economic centers, than we can have thought-centers without brain-centers, or oceans without ocean beds. In a genuine Christian church, men are lifted back into the image of God and put into fellowship with God in the use of all their economic power for their own mutual good and for the good of the entire human race.

Here each true church enters the economic zone of life; it becomes a center of impulsions in the souls of men that make them choose to use property to help men instead of rule them with it, to free men instead of enslave them with it. With each local church thus functioning economically in its own community, with each church in contact with the whole world by trade and organization and wire and press and mail and express and freight as it now is, with each church realizing its interdependence with all other like churches, with each church refusing to relax in its testimony to the Lord Jesus in compromise with the unredeemed society around it trying to flatter it instead of accepting its Saviour and Lord, and with each church giving unmistakable evidence of its unanimous conviction that its members are to regard themselves in the production and use of property as the representatives of God in dealing with the sons and daughters of the same Father and Owner of all—with all true churches lined up this way economically by an experience like that which came to the very first church of Christian history, there would be a renovation of our present economic order in the world.

within two generations. All this is possible, inevitable even, if our churches in a revival will find the way into the experience in which the first Christians knew God and one another and their possessions in Jesus Christ.

The local churches are the executors of the economic phase of God's Kingdom among men. It is in the churches that most people have their experience of God; not in school-houses and courts and stores and factories. State governments, ecclesiastical powers and big business corporations are remote from these experiences. If in the economic aspects of Christian life the organic integrity of each church is continually given full play, we shall keep the finances of Christian work aglow in Christian experience and shall prevent the centralization of economic power that might dominate the churches. In the development of the economic phase of Christianity, if we keep guaranteed to each local church its right to choose its own agencies to which to entrust its funds for the extension of its work, we shall have forever two break-waters against the concentration of economic power over the churches: (1) each individual member in the church to designate to what cause or persons his contribution shall go, and then (2) each church also to choose the channels through which it will direct its undesignated funds to be used. If we shall faithfully follow this policy and keep our churches open to the work of the Holy Spirit, fountains of economic support will flow forth from them continually for kingdom enterprises all over the world. If we violate this policy, and put external pressure on the churches for money and the churches succumb to this pressure, no room is left in them for the Holy Spirit who deals only with the free in his work. Thus the springs of the stream of regular free offering to God dry up, and we have to fall back on a centralized agency to collect money,

an ecclesiasticism indeed tussling with half-dead churches for funds to carry out its programs.

If the local churches are to be kept central and free and efficient in the development of the economic phase of Christianity, they must be held in conscious touch with the living God and they must have the ability and a system to take care of their finances in a business-like way. Careless, incompetent financial secretaries and treasurers, and poorly kept records, and irregular financial reports are notorious obstacles to the work of local churches. It is a tragedy for a church of Jesus Christ not to have the financial confidence of its own members.

Economically as well as spiritually the hope of the world now is free, independent, interdependent, democratic, organic New Testament churches. As speedily as possible we need to plant them and train them all over the earth. They are to be taught that it is not enough for them to glow with the spiritual fervor of the day of Pentecost; that they need now equally as much a sense of the economic effects of God in the souls of his people. It is estimated that it will take at least a million of such churches to care for even a minority of the world's population, allowing an average of five hundred members to the church. The largest enterprise of all the ages is Christian missions. It can not longer be supported and enlarged without a fuller development of the economic phase of Christian life in the churches than has yet appeared in Christian history. The financing of the world program of Christianity is the greatest economic problem of the world's betterment, and is the economic measure of God's power in the lives of his people.

CHAPTER VII

FINANCING THE CHRISTIAN WORLD PROGRAM

The largest thing in the world is the Christian program. All nations, races, ages, business corporations, governments, institutions, educational systems, literatures, religions, Christian denominations, churches, banks, railroads, steamer lines, radio stations, financial exchanges, factories, fields, stores, and every man, woman and child dead, living and unborn are counted in the numbers of this program. It is the slow, full coming of the kingdom of heaven into the earth. In its agenda, God and heaven are counted in and nothing that concerns man or the earth is left out. God saving lost souls and saved souls saving a lost world of souls and things, until the whole earth is saved: God's Spirit in men inspiring and energizing them for this work until the gigantic task is all done.

I. THE WORLD PROGRAM

for Christianity is not a matter of supporting certain institutions, nor of establishing a Universal Church or millions of local churches on earth. These are all mere means. Colleges, universities, hospitals, orphanages, refuge houses, even churches, are simply outgrowths and temporary instruments of God's kingdom coming among men and destined to fill the earth.

There can be no hard and fast limits of the Christian World Program. Its measure is the dimensions of the earth, the depth of the needs of man and the power and purpose of God. None of these can be

definitely marked out. Our so-called organized Christianity usually gets itself encased in minutely delimited plans, which leave out the most vital things of the gospel and large areas of human life where the need for God is deepest and gravest. Most men, even many Christians, are afraid of an uncontrolled Christianity; it might run wild, they fear; they try to bind God and force him to work through certain established channels of their own making or consent, and in certain compartments of the world as they have it divided up in their sciences and philosophies. Christianity is not bound and Christianity does not bind anybody; it sets men free.

No hierarchy, nor council, nor conference, nor convention, nor alliance of Christians can regulate the program of the kingdom. It is too big for them; it is inherent in the power of the gospel and the need of the world; it is already outlined in the very nature of both God and man. Men can think of only parts and aspects of it. It is self-regulating and self-executing, if the Christ of God is let into the hearts of men. It is the love of God kindled in the souls of men, liberating them and lifting them into control of themselves and of their surroundings for voluntary, unrestrained service to the whole race of man. World-democracy is its child. Not domination by strong authority, but permeation by a free spirit is its method of transforming and unifying the world.

Alexander and Caesar and Charlemagne and Napoleon and William Hohenzollern and others all had world programs as they understood the world: but they were all plans to bring the whole world under the material sway of small parts of the world. Jesus' program is exactly the opposite of these: He seeks to bring all races and classes of men into a sense of their spiritual oneness in God and into control of all parts of the world for the universal good of man

and for the joy and love of his Father. Pan-Slavism, or Pan-Anglicanism, or Pan-Germanism, or even Pan-Americanism, if any one of them had the power, would suffocate human freedom and waste and wreck large parts of the material world. But Pan-Christianity, when given enough men and means to do its work, will set the spirit of man utterly free and save the material resources of the world to right uses for the real good of the entire race of man.

"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel of repentance and remissions of sins to the whole creation, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," is the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹ This is the boldest, most universal, most final order ever given to men. It seems simple at first; but study shows it to be the most comprehensive program ever issued.

See this Great Commission, if you can, as a giant tree; its leaves to shade the earth; its fruit to feed all mankind; its trunk to hold it aloft and to defy all the storms of time; its roots to grip the earth from center to circumference and hold it in shape. Leaves and fruit, trunk, roots of a vast world program; they are all in the Great Commission. Missions, preaching the gospel, evangelism are the roots of it—"preach the gospel to the whole creation baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Christian education is the trunk—"make disciples (pupils, students) of all nations, teaching them to observe." Righteousness, temperance, social reform, peace, service, orphanages, hospitals; in short, social service as we call it,—all these are the leaves and fruits of the Christian world program—"observe whatsoever I have commanded you" in such discourses as the

¹Composite of Matt. 28: 19, 20; Mark 16: 15; Luke 24: 47.

sermon on the mount, the address to his home people at Nazareth, the parables and discourses and private talks as recorded in the four gospel records.

Top, trunk, roots of Christ's program for the world, let us study each more carefully for a few minutes:

1. *Missions.*

Go to the root of the matter: Begin in the roots. Here are the life sources. The taproot of Christianity is the missionary spirit; Jesus himself, its Founder was "the Sent One" of God, Heaven's missionary to earth.¹ "Go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature" is our orders. The missionary spirit is the very germ and juice of genuine Christianity; its flavor and fragrance; the source of its sap.

Preach the Gospel: This is the root-life of all Christian activity. This is the most radical and far-reaching work God has ever given man to do. In giving the gospel of his Son to us to preach it to our fellow-men, God gave us a hand with himself in remodeling and remaking the world; the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; and it is entrusted to us to make it known.

In preaching the gospel, we are not simply furnishing facts nor mumbling mere words to men; we are thrusting the live wire of God's power into the lives of men, disinfecting their souls of sin and welding them together into new spiritual relations. We are helping God to build a new humanity in the earth; we are, under God, setting up at the bottom of the deepest experiences of men a "kingdom not of this world" which is flowing in upon our souls from other worlds, a kingdom which is to fill the earth, a kingdom which in the death of every true Christian is already overflowing the earth into other worlds. This is the

¹John 17: 18.

deepest, vastest work ever committed to men. In it, man still in nature is brought into conscious contact with power above nature; it is the work of a second creation. It is the testimony of those who know that God is still in nature and that he works directly in the souls of men with a freedom and an immediacy that natural law cannot hamper. It is making creation transparent to the souls of men, so that they can face the Creator himself. In other words, it is not imitation of Christ; it is a testimony to Christ that actually reproduces Christ himself in the lives of believers. Jesus cannot be copied: he can only be reproduced in life. He cannot be conveyed from man to man in words; words only suggest him; the Spirit makes him real after he is suggested. Then the real Jesus renovates—"if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature."

Make the world over again. That's our work. Preach the gospel. Preach it in public address; in informal conversation; in quiet living. This is the work of every Christian, one way or another. Keep spreading the divine contagion among the souls of men until the whole earth is saturated with a sense of the nearness and holiness and love and power of God. Everything else in the Christian world program waits upon this—the gospel must first be published in all nations, then comes the end of the age of sin.¹

Plant New Testament Churches: Wherever the gospel of Jesus is preached in dead earnest, souls are born again. Wherever two reborn souls meet and try to tell their experiences to each other they are drawn together in the deepest depths of their being. They are bound together with bonds that reach deeper into their lives than politics, or education, or economic considerations can ever reach.

¹Matt. 24: 14.

In the conversation about their Lord and Saviour of two saved people on a street corner, there is the germ of a possible church. "If two or three meet in my name, I am in their midst," says the Lord. Two is the smallest number that can possibly meet. If they keep meeting on the street and talking through their experiences of God, others will finally join them in the conversation; they will soon find it better to get off the street into a private place in a household or on a vacant lot where they can study and pray to know more of God and of Jesus. As they turn to the Bible and to God and to one another and to churches in reach of them for more light, without approval or even the consent of any constituted authority on earth, they may take on the ordinances and begin to do the work of the Lord. Thus ultimately another New Testament church breaks into view in the community.

So in this free quiet way the earth is to be covered with a veritable forest of New Testament churches. It will require at least two millions of them to bring even a working majority of mankind under Christ's reign on earth. This is a big job. But our part is to plant the gospel seeds in the hearts of men and water them; God will give the increase. The time required may be long or short for this work—one day and a thousand years are all the same with God. The world is ultimately safe, so long as there are two saved souls who meet in the name of Christ; one sound seed is enough to sow down the earth with trees.

Let these churches be planted as fast as possible. Keep them true to the economic experience of the first church of Jesus Christ without enslavements to its temporary methods in dealing with a local situation in one community. Insist that God and the souls of the Christians are more real and more valuable to

every member of every new church, than money or houses, or acres or bonds or cattle or pigs. Pray for an unanimous sense in every body of young Christians that God is the Owner of the earth, and that his children in transient possession of small parts of it, represent him as children and stewards. In every young church, weed out the Ananiases and Sapphiras as poisonous briars. Since we have failed to do this in the old churches of our so-called Christian countries, let us in the mission fields in every church dissolve our rocky economics with the concentrated economia of the First of all the churches. In all heathen lands we should, without fear or compromise, press home the experience of original Christians as related in the fourth and fifth chapters of Acts. The churches, creatures of God, are to be creators of a new economic order in the earth; not a legal communism in goods, but a free communion with God and with one another in the use of goods in every community of redeemed men and women throughout the world. Nowhere is the local Christian program less than this. This will be universal, too, if with the certainty of God we preach an unmaimed gospel to the whole creation.

Take the Whole World: Nothing can go now, except on a world scale. There are now no isolated national questions: for instance, the United States cannot fully enforce its prohibition amendment to its own constitution without the co-operation of other nations. An oil company, a steel corporation, the tobacco trade, the automobile industry, even a chewing gum concern, and every other line of business have to be organized now all around the earth before they can approach their possibilities. If this is true of interests that deal with minute needs and wants of our bodies, it becomes a million-fold necessity when we come to the gospel of God, which is concerned with all

the life of the world for all time and eternity. A billion lost souls now living, the undeveloped and misused resources of all islands and continents and oceans of the earth, and the unity of the human race are all involved in the issues of the gospel.

To preach this gospel is the highest and hardest and most expensive work to which God calls men. It has already cost God his life; it costs the real preacher a surrendered life of slow burning on God's altar; it costs every soul who heeds it a living self-death before God. It requires the most highly trained men to do the most important part of this preaching work. God sometimes uses and overrules the blunders of the ignorant. But he never puts a premium upon ignorance. The first preachers of the gospel were not ignoramuses and boneheads. All of them, except one, had gone for three years to a school let down out of heaven upon earth; and that one exception was as highly trained man as the Roman empire ever produced. Part of our modern gospel ministry needs to be trained with Jesusitical thoroughness; for it has to contend not only with pagan philosophy, but with the most delicate and deceiving corruptions and counterfeits, and the most poisonous adulterations of Christianity that educated human genius, working under the inspiration of Satan, the angel of false light, has ever been able to concoct for the ruin of the world. Here comes in the necessity for Christian colleges and seminaries to be true to the Christian experience of God, and to be so supported that they can be used of God without stint or limit in the training of tens of thousands of preachers, called of God to preach the gospel everywhere.

Then wherever these called, trained Christians go to preach they should be so supported in material things that they will be able to do the Lord's work at their highest possible efficiency. They are the

ambassadors of heaven to all the earth; earthly ambassadors, compared to them, representing earthly governments in only parts of the earth, are in paltry, trifling business. We are going to have wars on earth just as long as we put more into the support of lying, international diplomacies between rotten courts and senates and councils, than we put into the support of God's ambassage out of heaven to all mankind. This long we shall have war; but sadder still, this long we shall deserve war.

Missions, evangelism, is the taproot of the Christian World Program. Now we come to the trunk of the tree, which is—

2. *Christian Education.*

"Teaching them," as we are commanded in our Lord's last charge, is the most tedious and the most expensive process in the whole program of Christ on earth. This item in the agenda of the kingdom is the most important work of Christians in our present age, which is fast adopting education as the method of controlling itself. Every man is now confronted with the alternative, be "educated or regulated." This is peculiarly the teaching age; there was never so much teaching everywhere as now, and it is necessarily multiplying.

Education Must Become Universal: There is no other alternative safe. Full momentum for it is already developed and the speed is accumulating. Dogs, trees, horses, snakes, vines, fleas and cabbages can be trained by man. But they are never trained for their own sakes, but for the sake of their trainers; and they can never train one another. But not so with men: they can train themselves; they can train one another; they train for the sake of the ones trained; and the trained ones become trainers of others. Thus the human training is geometrical in its progress and touches the infinite. Every human youth enters the work

world to be something anywhere from a pauper to a capitalist, between a slave and a monarch. Every babe is born with the possibility of being a midget or a Jack Dempsey, an idiot or a Napoleon. Among beings with all this unlimited possibility who have the power to train one another for the benefit of the trained, and then put the trained to training still others in multiplied numbers, there is no limit to the range of education. The world is just now waking up to this.

Education, practically till our own day, has been almost confined to favored classes and exceptional individuals. Now it is opening up to everybody. World democracy is bringing the average person to the center of modern society in every land and making the fate of our civilization depend upon his behavior and service and consent. Political democracy cannot survive in any country without intelligent voters. The democratic governments of the earth are already committed to a policy of universal education, helplessly and irretrievably committed, and are backing it up with the taxing power and the police force of the state. Universal state education is the desperate self-defense of political democracy against its own inherent dangers wherever congresses and parliaments meet to represent the people in law-making power. Both the Americas, Australia, England, all the new Republics of Europe, China and Russia are fast swinging into universal education for all their peoples.

Then besides this, the complicated inventions and the economic complexity of modern life are making universal education a necessity throughout our civilization. The unskilled worker will soon be helpless and in a hopeless minority in every civilized people; almost negligible. Electricity and gas, new servants of man, are doing the work done by human slaves in former times. There is a growing demand for

intelligence instead of brute force to do the world's drudgery; nerves instead of muscles; brains instead of bones. The most thorough training and the keenest skill must now go into overalls. The life of the world is coming fast to depend upon universal education; this is already true in all civilized countries where political democracy and improved machinery have come, and will be true everywhere just as fast as Christian missions wake up the people.

Universal Education Must be Made Christian: There is nothing on earth so dangerous as godless knowledge. It wrecked the world once; it was the desire for the "knowledge of good and evil" so that the human spirit might dethrone God that smashed the Garden of Eden. Selfish skill in a man or a class of men is a peril. It is the most important fact in the history of the last half-century that the German people were methodically indoctrinated with the idea of a German world-predominance based on might, and with the theory that war was a necessary thing in life.¹ To say the least, modern German education is an example of whither an irreligious system of state education may lead a people and of what it may cost the rest of the world. If people are selfish, the more educated, the more selfish they are, and the more powerful and cruel their selfishness becomes. If they are covetous and materialistic, mere education only increases their avarice and makes them more blind to spiritual reality and personal worth. Without a regeneration of the people that makes them love and serve one another, education postpones, prepares for and eventually precipitates fatal conflict. That's the route we are going now in all the vast educational systems of the world, except in a relatively few real Christian schools. It is time for a halt, and some serious thought. To educate simply for economic

¹Wells, *The Outline of History*, p. 1005.

success intensifies the class struggle between capital and labor, and ultimately will bring on revolution. To educate for mere citizenship in a political democracy inflames nationalisms and sets the fuses for inevitable wars. To educate in the love of Christ and humanity puts educated people into the service of the whole human race and surveys out through the wilderness of the world's economic and political confusions the highways for permanent universal peace.

In the light of these facts, it should make us very solemn to reflect that just now there are indications that America may become the educational Mecca of the whole world, the student center of world democracy.¹

There are now two educational necessities throughout Christendom: one is to support, enlarge and multiply our Christian schools, colleges and seminaries; the other is to find a line of entrance into the state systems of education that will enable the churches to give systematic Christian training to all students from the grammar grades to the post-graduate classes in technical schools and universities; to give in them courses of Christian culture, which the state itself cannot give. This is an immense program. It is not a matter in one state or nation; it is to be a burning issue wherever modern economics, political democracy, and the Christian missionary meet; the whole race, the whole earth is to be involved in the outcome of it.

Our Christian schools are furnishing the leaven for society; but they are now, in the large, either inadequately equipped for their work or they are in danger of selling out to our present anti-Christian economic order by their financial dependence upon the incomes of their invested endowments and upon the patronage of the well-to-do. There is even probability that the political exigencies in state education will drive the

¹*Men and World Service*, p. 187.

Christian schools against the wall; many of them have already died out as distinctly Christian schools. As for penetrating the state systems of schools with the spirit and teachings of Jesus, we are hardly begun; a weekly young people's union, just a half-hour Sunday-school class and an occasional Vacation Bible School, with a slight beginning in spots of the church week-day schools for public school children now mark the present limits of our accomplishments in this challenging field. Christian education is in infantile weakness on the mission fields, and in the so-called Christian countries it faces a struggle for its very life. A most tremendous question for both Christendom and heathendom is, Shall the education of separate nations be materialistic, political simply, or shall the education of the whole race be human and Christian? Shall Christian education be made universal? This may be our supreme immediate issue that will decide the fate of the world for a thousand years to come.

Christian education, if ever made universal, is to cost much in financial means to support it. And it will take an army of trained teachers to do the work. We have barely begun the task in the few Christian schools we have started and in the little teaching we are doing in our churches.

3. *Social Service*

is the visible aspect, the leaves and the fruit, the decorations of Christianity. Mind you, it is not Christianity itself. It is only the sure effects of genuine Christianity wherever it gets rooted and grows. The tree is known by its fruit, and the fruit of the gospel is loving service to men.

Service and Christ inseparable: The Master himself declared he had come among men not to be served, but to serve. He reversed the world's standard of greatness: with him, the greatest are those who

serve most. Till Christ, God was thought of as the ruling Sovereign: in Christ, God is revealed as the suffering Servant.

"Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy mind and all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself." This is the sum-total of the law and the gospel: love to God and to men. Love to God is invisible as God is invisible: love to men is our love to God become visible, for men made in the image of God are visible. Did you ever notice the glass register on the outside of a steam-boiler, put there to show how high the water is on the inside of the boiler? You can not see the water-level in the boiler; but you can see it in the transparent glass of the register. Well, the love we show for our fellowmen is the level of our love to God. The men around us are the images of God: they are the children of God. If we do not love them, we do not love God. "If a man say I love God and yet hateth his brother, he is a liar; for if he love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Love is never satisfied, except in the service of those we love.

Much service now takes social form: Christianity is fundamentally and essentially personal. It is always personal in Christian experience. Much of the time in the past, Christians have believed that Christianity was entirely, exclusively, personal with no social implications at all. Men have been living further apart individually than they can live now; they were each more dependent upon nature for their living, and less dependent upon one another, than they are now.

But it now becomes clear that the renovation and the reconstruction of human society are part of the program of the kingdom of heaven among men. It is also growing clearer that all social regeneration and all social service must come from persons born into the kingdom and made ready to serve others. But

further still, men are now jammed so close together in the complex, intimate, material and mechanical arrangements of modern life that the social implications of an experience of God are crowded upon each soul who comes to know God as his Father. Christianity cannot now avoid the necessity of taking part in social service.

Much social service must be preventive of evil instead of being helpful to afflicted and unfortunate people. Acting the good Samaritan to the man who falls among thieves is always good; but it is better to police the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, so that men may no longer fall among thieves on that route. If "visiting the widows and fatherless in their affliction" is a practical side of religion, pure and undefiled, then legislation that destroys industrial injustice which kills off husbands and makes widows, and the application of science that conquers diseases which slay fathers and make children motherless, and the work of statesmanship that prevents war from killing husbands and fathers and making millions of both widows and orphans, and social reform that ends the whiskey traffic which wrecks homes, all these and the like are parts of the Christian program.

Civic righteousness, industrial justice, international peace, temperance, sanitation and all such are all inevitably involved in the direct effects of the gospel. We must have everywhere either institutions to do all these lines of work or a searching, compelling propaganda that will force the governments of the people to do it. Either of these is expensive and both must be borne by the people who know God as Father and regard him as the Owner of the earth.

The agencies for this preventive work cannot operate without economic support; they can not find their support elsewhere than in God's people. No one organization or denomination alone can do it all;

consequently, it can not all be provided for in one budget. Here is the field for interdenominational co-operation and it should be adequately financed.

But with all possible precautions taken to remove the causes of widowhood and orphanhood and suffering and poverty and grief and disease, there will still be enough of human need for Christians to have full opportunity to render personal service to their neighbors in trouble. Disasters, like the revolution in Russia, the earthquake in Japan, the famine in China, happening often, cannot be relieved without material help. The time will never come, till the kingdom comes, when there will not be emergencies that call for relief committees to handle wholesale relief for stricken areas of the earth. Any Christian program which does not make full room for effective immediate answers to such distressing appeals of unforeseen human situations as these, woefully misrepresents the Christ himself. And these items cannot be budgeted beforehand; they are emergencies, unheralded opportunities.

But much social service can be institutionalized: There are many steady, normal streams of human need. Institutions can be established and maintained to meet average necessities. For instance, a certain per cent of a population is regularly sick every day; hence hospitals. A certain per cent go insane every year; hence asylums for the insane. A certain per cent of fathers and mothers die every year; hence orphanages for their children. Such institutions are arrangements for meeting the constant and only slightly varying conditions of the people they serve: and they are wonderful opportunities to serve people in the name and spirit of our God.

Orphanages are one of the flowers of Christianity. They express institutionally the love of Jesus for little children. The work of Christ will not be well

done on earth so long as Christians allow a single hungry child to cry for bread or a single orphan child to cry in vain for the touch of a loving hand. Christian hospitals are the continuation of the healing work of Jesus. They are medical science under the sway of Christ in the service of mankind. The kingdom of God has not filled the earth so long as there is one sick person dying out of reach of Christian physicians and Christian nurses. Strangely enough, so far Christianity has never mothered insane asylums; they are left to the state; but they are the grandchildren of Christianity, and they offer the opportunity for Christlike self-sacrifice to those who work in them in the service of the most unfortunate of the earth. Orphanages, asylums, hospitals,—modern Christendom is to be filled with them. They are the fruits and flowers of the gospel in human society. They are in Christ's world program and must be supported at immense cost.

The Christian World Program: Its roots, millions of New Testament churches in the world; its trunk, a system of Christian education founded in every New Testament church, fostered in strong Christian schools and colleges, and fastened into every state school in every land; its fruits and flowers, social service and sanitation and civic righteousness that make every neighborhood clean, and offer hospitals and asylums and orphanages everywhere until none sick in mind or body and no orphan child shall cry in vain for healing and care. It will require millions of men and women absolutely consecrated to God and trained into the highest possible efficiency, and billions of dollars to carry out this program. It is the vastest conception that ever touched the mind of man; so great is it that man has not yet fully conceived it. Only God could have initiated it among men; and he is still pressing it into their minds. It is greater, more

important, more costly than the total of all the mighty conquests of history.

II. FINANCING THE CHRISTIAN WORLD PROGRAM

1. *Inadequately Financed Now:*

This infinite enterprise of God in men and among men is still a mendicant and a beggar in our present economic order. We have not succeeded in financing God's kingdom on earth so long as there is one sincere child of God, who for lack of means cannot be trained for the highest service within his capacity, or so long as any child of God, trained or untrained, is held back by lack of means from any service that he may yearn to render to any of the rest of God's children anywhere in the world. We have miserably failed to finance God's work among men so long as there is a single human government seated in any spot of the earth that has more resources at hand for killing people in war than Christianity has at hand for saving and healing and training all mankind in time of peace. Our financial failures in the support of Christian work are shameful, for they force upon the world either commercialized religion or pauperized Christianity.

We have never had vital Christianity fully financed. Even the Apostle Paul lived in financial embarrassment. All through history we have had vital religion in economic dependence, or degenerate religion in economic dominance. The world still waits to see what will happen when vital Christianity and economic strength are coupled together. Where religion has in any way achieved economic independence, the unrestrained possessive instincts of unregenerate men have commercialized the institutions of religion. That will always be the case, even with Christianity, unless Christians are really born into the sense of the Ownership as well as the Fatherhood of God; born into the

conviction that it is an impossibility for God to function as the Father of men in this world unless among men he is accorded the rights of absolute Owner of the world in which he is caring for them and growing them into his own likeness.

Commercialized Religion: False religion always has a chance to sell out; and the more truth it has the better bargain it can make. A sold religion is always a spoilt religion. Jesus hated it and lashed it out of the temple, when he saw the money changers in the holy place. Judas knew he could get his price for his Lord. As sea-gulls follow laden ships, so selfish men hang on the gospel; "harpies of the kingdom," ready to "take it by force" any time.¹ Commercialized religion has no power; it becomes a mere trick in the hands of selfish men. It quits the work of God with the souls of men; it builds fine houses, puts on fine clothes, and goes to peddling out indulgences, running oyster suppers, conducting entertainments, working chance games, et cetera, to raise money. Such religion is not its own; it is sold out to Mammon.

Pauperized Christianity: In many places the only alternative to commercialized religion is a pure Christianity that has to beg its way in the world. It stands, hat in hand, bowing at banks and business offices and begging pardon for being in the way. Jesus still comes unto his own, and is not received.

The kingdom of heaven is still economically depressed on earth. With its work only barely begun, it has not sufficient funds to enlarge its plans; it stays in debt. It is poorer than oil, or steel, or tobacco, or automobiles. Coca-cola and chewing gum and the movies are running ahead of it financially. It makes itself known to parts of the world chiefly through its piteous appeals for help. It gets pity instead of demanding respect and support. The present financial

¹Matt. 11: 12.

condition of Christian work is distressing. Mission boards, Christian schools and colleges and seminaries and hospitals and orphanages and local churches are all overwhelmed with millions of indebtedness. This seems to be a general situation throughout the larger Christian denominations of prosperous America. The worst is not the debts; the worst is the deadening material luxury and extravagance in which members of our churches are living.

2. *Let the kingdom swing into its own economically:* Sometime ago a young minister was entertained in the home of an official of one of our large American corporations. With head thrown back, puffing a cloud of cigar smoke toward the ceiling of his palatial home, the corporation officer said in a patronizing tone, "Ah, well, you ministers do not know anything about business; you are not expected to, as you have nothing to do with it in your work." That was too much for the young minister who really took his work seriously. He rose from his seat, stepped in front of the lordly business man, looked him square in the face, and said, "Sir, I would have you to know that I am connected with a business enterprise so large that, compared to it, the American Tobacco Company, the Standard Oil Company and the United States Steel Corporation all rolled into one are not worth fifteen cents!" The kingdom of God is the vastest business enterprise ever set up on the earth. It is that; or it is a farce, a figment of excited imagination. The young minister was everlastingly right. Let us no more apologize for Christianity before the economic world: it is treachery to God the Owner of all to do so.

The Christian program is a larger concern than any business corporation, or labor union, or earthly government. It is bigger than either capital or labor, and is in position to make demands that will require both capital and labor working together in enthusiastic

co-operation to meet. The kingdom of God has more right in men and among them than the British Empire, than the United States of America, than the League of Nations could ever have, than any government or all the governments on earth. Its program is ultimately to abolish the necessity for any of these and to fill the earth with the knowledge of God as the waters fill the oceans. Its budget will finally absorb the total producing capacity of man and of the earth.

God really first, then all resources are ours for this work. This is the one fundamental necessity, the only necessity, in getting all the wealth of the world for the support of the Christian program: Christians must know God as their own Father and as Owner of the earth and everything in it. Our only trouble is, we have ideas of God instead of God himself; and our ideas of him are too small. The pitiable offerings we make for the work of God among men are the material measure of our conceptions of the true God. Subconsciously, we feel that if we had the money to support missions, schools, hospitals, orphanages, we would not need God in our Christian work.

If we could get the finances for the Christian program without the necessity of thinking more of God himself than of the finances, our Christian enterprise would immediately be a mere matter of dollars and cents just as godless as any other business concern. With God, Father of our souls and of all our brothers, and Owner of every acre and inch of the earth once, first, and highest, and nearest, and mightiest in our Christian experience, incidentally but surely we shall have

Plentiful resources at hand for every phase of Christian work everywhere. For immediately we become unafraid of the accumulated wealth of men. We lose our awe for the wealthy. We dare to declare God's

truth to their consciences. When in God's work we get so we do not fear the rich, the rich begin to fear God. They recognize God the Owner, restitution sets in. Immediately offerings come in: regular offerings begin. God is acknowledged in the last wills and testaments of those who had forgotten him. What we need in our dealings with wealthy Christians is a real sense of God the Owner in ourselves that enables us to make him real to them. That will open their vaults to God's work.

But the wealth already accumulated in the hands of a few wealthy Christians is the merest trifle of the resources available for us for kingdom uses in the incessant producing energy of millions of Christians who are doing the world's daily work. We have tried to support Christian work out of the dividends of invested capital. We need also to get it on the pay-rolls of the world's workers. With God the Owner made real in their souls and with the principles of stewardship trained into their lives, their almost infinite earning power will break forth into streams of offerings to God that will make the total income from every levy, from every tariff law and from every income tax of all the governments of the world look small. And that is just the way it should be: for Christ is Lord of all, or else he is not Lord at all. Real Christian work can be done only by sincere Christians. But unless it has the power to permeate the economic activity around it with the vital economy of the New Testament, Christianity, wherever it is fully financed for its work, gets itself into shape to hire its work done; it then falls into the hands of traders and mercenaries: hirelings instead of Christians pretend to do its work, without its spirit and for pay; imposing temples, paid choirs, popular preachers, false prophets and jingling rituals become the symptoms of its dying condition. Its spiritual

power is gone. It succumbs to the economic order from which it draws its support. Genuine Christianity, thus stifled and stunted, gives way to its surfeited counterfeits that strut around in its place in modern society. This is almost our plight now, and it will be entirely so, unless, in the light of the whole world's needs, our churches now get refreshed in the economic experience of the first Christians and thrust it forth into industry and trade, the *economia* of the Christ so energized of the Holy Spirit as to saturate and transform our whole economic order.

Economia must now conquer economics; or else New Testament Christianity must economically starve. This is the issue. Jesus must be crowned King in the economics of mankind, or else his kingdom is to remain tributary to earthly kingdoms.

But with the original teachings of Jesus as to property actually experienced as in the first church, systematically taught and practically applied in our present-day world conditions, in all free sovereign local Christian churches, democratic Christianity will again become militant and mighty, our godless economics will be set aflame with Christian *economia*, business will bow to Christ, and there will burst out from beneath the foundations of the kingdoms of this world streams of revenue sufficient for all the work of "the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ."

The suction pumps of special appeals for various agencies and aspects of Christian work, and the force pumps of high-pressure campaigns must be done away. Artesian wells are to break forth. God's resources for kingdom work cannot be forced through channels fixed by human manipulation. No organization can keep a monopoly on the use of them, even in God's work. There must be utter democracy and spontaneity everywhere. The freedom of the individual Christian and the sovereignty of the local church

must be kept inviolate: they are the only breakwaters we have against the encroachments of ecclesiasticism into our Christian democracy. Offerings and gifts to God for his work are to be neither forced nor restrained; they are to mark the level of the Christian's sense of the nearness and love and rights of God. Not waterspouts in spots, but a general rise of the level of the tides is what will come when we let the Holy Spirit work in our churches of to-day in matters economic as he worked in the first church, and when we put on in each church where he thus works a course of training in stewardship, built on the fundamental Christian experience that God our Father is also the Owner of all ours. Our various denominational mechanisms for raising money are necessary now, because we are doing so little.

With the experience of economic truth, wrought of the Holy Spirit in the first church, reproduced in our modern churches and with a system of Christian training in economia built around that experience when it occurs in a church, swelling finances will flow forth in an incessant stream for the support of Christian work all over the earth. Our only hope for adequate resources to execute our Lord's program in the earth is to so surrender to the Spirit that he may make the experience of the first church general in all true local churches of Christ in our stressful day. Shall we do so?

CHAPTER VIII

OUR CIVILIZATION AND CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP



CIVILIZATION is the co-operative control of men over forces and resources of nature.

No definition of civilization can equal that in Genesis;¹ it is "man multiplying and replenishing and subduing the earth."

The trouble is men have been trying to own instead of subduing the earth. If there were only one man on earth in control of it, there would be no civilization; just one lonely man. If there were millions of people on earth with no power to master nature's secrets and no capacity to use tools, using only their fingers and toes and teeth, there would be no civilization; just a race of animals. But wherever human beings begin to work together catching game, driving beasts of burden, planting and tending seed and soil, using tools first of wood, then of stone and finally of steel, begetting and rearing children and passing on to them their accumulated advantages, there are all the elements of civilization; it may grow to almost infinite complexity over any habitable area of the earth.

Civilization, the organized and accumulating control of men over nature, is a slow process. The story of it is the history of man. Its beginnings and its outcome are both veiled in impenetrable dark. We have only a few tattered chapters in the middle of the record.

Civilization is the costliest thing we have in this world with only one lone exception—the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel has cost God his own Son

¹Gen. 1: 28.

to save the race of mankind. Civilization has cost man all the efforts of the race till now. One is the achievement of man; the other is the gift of God. Both are precious beyond computation.

Count, if you can, the costs of civilization. It has cost all the failures at civilization strewn along the pathways of history. It has cost thousands of years of longing for better things among the silent throngs of men and women of all races and times. Every pain of every child of man from cold or heat or wound in struggle with ice or fire or beast or stone is in the cost of it. The utter devotion of every scientist that has spent his life prying into nature's myteries is an item of the cost of it. No reformer in any age has spoken out against wrong and suffered at the hands of his fellowman but that he paid part of the price of civilization. Every drop of blood spilt by every soldier in every war of the history of man is to be counted in this cost. Every conflict of every kind between individual men as they slowly learned to work together is to be entered in this list of costs. Every pang of every woman who has come down to the dark waters of motherhood to launch another human being into this life is to be reckoned in the huge cost of civilization.

The gospel is of a seeking, loving God; civilization is of lost struggling man. Separate the gospel and civilization: one becomes ineffective; the other disintegrates.

I. IS OUR CIVILIZATION COLLAPSING?

This is a real question. It cannot be laughed out of court. It cannot be hissed off the stage. The world is tangled in a skein of interrogations: Are we to have a revival that saves men or a revolution that destroys civilization? Are the civilization of man and the gospel of God to be brought together? Will God save the

race in our civilization, or from it? Is our present materialistic civilization to be destroyed to give God a chance to save men and use them in building a righteous civilization? Such questions will not down. Thinking men cannot get away from them.

This is no time for short-sighted, loud-talking optimism. Sticking your own eyes into your own hat does not make it midnight everywhere; nor does turning on a little flashlight in your own pocket make it midday anywhere. In great issues like these, hats and flashlights get us nowhere. Throw them aside and look up at the stars, if you want to see things in the large and learn the real direction that the ship is speeding. Those who are cock-sure of the permanence of our civilization should stop and reflect that many civilizations have collapsed in the past.

1. Archaeology gives sad testimony of their ruins.

On the banks of the Nile stand the Pyramids and the Tombs of the Pharaohs, monuments of a proud civilization, telling all future times that a civilization, despite its material achievements, if it leaves out God, is doomed to crumble and to leave only dead signs of its glory behind. In the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates, the ruins of Babylon tell the same truth to us. Nearer us is the Temple of the Sun in Mexico that reminds us that a civilization is buried here, too. These are just hints of what the monuments tell us of dead civilizations; many areas of the earth are covered with them. No man knows how many civilizations were drowned in the Mediterranean Valley when the ocean broke through the gates at Gibraltar and flooded it. Here maybe were the Garden of Eden, the land of Nod and the city of Enoch.¹ None knoweth.

¹Gen. 4: 17.

2. The Bible Gives Even Clearer Evidence That Civilizations Have Disappeared.

There was a civilization in Noah's time; it was well enough organized to build ships. Else, whence came the material, the tools and the workmen to build a ship so great as was the Ark?¹ Yet all of it perished in the Deluge. It had left God out.

There have been civilized peoples that dwelt in tents. But civilizations are more stable when they begin to dwell in houses. When they gain the power to erect high buildings and towers, they are becoming somewhat complex. Somewhere, perhaps in the land of Babylonia, was the plain of Shinar. Here men knew how to use brick and mortar. They drew the plans for a city and started to build a tower that would reach into heaven.² We have no idea how high the builders of Babel tower got with their edifice.

But alas! they were trying to shut God out of Babel. So it had to perish. Somewhere now in the plains of the East this grand tower lies flat, powdered into dust and mixed with mud beneath the sands of many millenniums. So die all civilizations that resist God. Sodom forgot God; it is no more. It could not live; there were not enough righteous people in it to keep it safe.³

Egypt had her chance to know God. In a slave boy God came to the Egyptians; then following him came Jacob and God's whole chosen family to dwell among them and teach them for four hundred years. Finally there grew up right in the center of the royal court, Moses, God's law-giver for the ages to come.

¹Gen. 6: 14f.

²Gen. 11: 1.

³Gen. 18.

But Egypt was blind to it all. The story of the struggles of the children of Israel in Egypt is the history of a civilization driving God out of its life. The book of Exodus is the real account of Egypt's death. After the people of God got out of Egypt, the Egyptian civilization was doomed. Indeed, it was already dead then, it just had to have a little more time to decay and disappear.

In fact, in a sense, Bible history is simply the story of a civilization whose people did not totally forget God, barely escaping extinction several times because its people almost forgot him. All the other civilizations, upon which the light of the Bible narrative incidentally falls, perished from the earth, because they left out God; not one of them still lives. The cities of Canaan are no more. The Phœnician civilization, the Syrian civilization, the Assyrian civilization, the Persian civilization, all leave out God and fade from the scene. Even the Greek and the Roman civilizations of the New Testament pass away for the same reason.

In short, God is concerned to save the peoples, and history is a series of the destructions of civilizations to save peoples. When civilization, the organized control of men over the forces and resources of a country, passes into godless hands it is always used to destroy people instead of support and multiply them. Luxury, oppression, murder, war, dissipation, excess, race suicide and the like become general. Then a loving God has no recourse but to smash civilization to save the race. This is history in a nutshell. For instance, God sent the flood in order to save the race of man, to keep it from totally destroying itself in sin; for if the flood had not saved a few, sin would eventually have destroyed all.¹

¹Gen. 6: 1-8.

History, and pre-history, are dotted with the collapses of civilization. Is our civilization insured to last? What is there in it to make it permanent? It is foolhardy to shut our eyes to lessons of history. Our present civilization is already sick. Unless there is a change in the course of its recent and present developments it is doomed to collapse. For it is already fatally

II. AFFLICTED WITH SEVERAL MALADIES

There have been many civilizations. Most of them have perished, or so changed themselves as to become unrecognizable, or they have been absorbed and lost in the larger civilizations of the present. By far the widest and most complex and costliest civilization of man is ours to-day. It has grown to the point that none of us can be quite sure whether we now have many racial or national civilizations in different countries, or just one vast world civilization.

This is true: whether we have one united civilization or several diverse civilizations, we have only one world and only one human race in it.

In this study, we regard all present civilizations as practically one civilization throughout the world. It is diseased and it has four world-wide symptoms of disintegration:

(1) The first sign of its collapsing condition is *the reign of lifeless things over the living souls of men*. Call it thingitis: it is worse than neuritis: it is epidemic. It is material control of mind. It is external physical pressure on the free souls of men.

This reign of things is *concentrated in our modern money*. Money is value concentrated into the smallest possible material bulk. At first men did not use money; they bartered; they gave cattle for land, they traded coon-skins for sugar. The exchange of things

was so cumbersome that they used then as few things as possible. It is suggested that the Chinese Empire has stood over three thousand years and the Roman Empire lasted only three hundred years because the Chinese remained a bartering people and the Romans used easy money.¹

For a long time money was heavy and awkward and had to be weighed like any other goods, as shown in the names of the Bible shekel and the English pound; trade in things between men was still so tedious and so inconvenient that their use of things they could not produce themselves was restrained. But money has finally become the supreme concentration of material value: it is now put into the smallest and lightest shape, coined of the most precious metal, and printed on strips of paper. Now with sufficient money in a bank, a man can issue a draft for a hundred million dollars as easily as for ten cents. There! You have a gold mine, a line of steamships, a railroad system concentrated in a bit of paper so small and so light a robin could take it in his bill and carry it to the top of the highest tree. Several automobiles can be put into one purse now. The modern capitalist can walk around now with a gold mine, a steamer line, a railroad track and scores of Mogul engines and cars in his vest pocket reduced to smaller size and lighter weight than a package of chewing gum. Money in the meagre form of paper, notes, drafts, bonds, has become the concentrated essence of the value of things and is the ruling god of our civilization, crowding the true God out of the thoughts of men.

With money men cannot buy the higher values of life; only things can be bought with it. And we are living now in a civilization of *machine-made things*. Things made by machinery have little or no personal association in human life and feelings. The school boy

¹Wells' *Outline of History*, p. 428f.

and the soldier away from home used to shed tears of homesickness over the pair of socks sent from home. Mother's tender hands had touched every stitch of them. Now mother no longer knits our socks; river and coal mine now knit them with fingers of unfeeling steel. A boy's socks are now as impersonal in their suggestions as any other scrap of cloth, just machine-made wrappings for his feet. Things we buy on the market to eat or wear or to use in any way now have practically no personal meaning for us; they are just some of the trillions of things turned out and brought to us by machinery. Those who produce things deal mostly with machines, instead of men, "in deadening, down-looking, dehumanizing dullness." The mutual human touch tends to fade out of life; we are treading out life in a machine civilization. The material arrangements of the modern world are merely the scaffoldings of the human spirit. In large part, men have ceased to be men and are now rats and bats, materialists, infesting the scaffoldings of social life.

When life is shut up largely to the use of machine-made things, and money concentrated into light paper is in reach to buy anything that a machine will make and bring to us, as it is now in all the centers of civilization, our whole life threatens to become a question of property instead of personality.

Persons and things are parallel factors in civilization. *Persons are the digits and things are the ciphers.* A person without anything at all has infinite value; a thing without a person to manipulate it is worthless. A dollar in the dirt out of the sight of men is worth exactly as much as a dead oak-leaf. A gold mine without men to work it has the same value as an empty cave.

Zero put after 2 multiplies it by ten, makes it 20; but 0 put before 2 divides its value by ten, makes it .02. Likewise, things after persons multiply the value

of the persons; but in front of them, they decimate the value of persons. Many rich folks are mere personal decimal fractions. Things on top of persons, if continued, will ultimately reduce our whole civilization to one huge decimal fraction, which the larger it becomes, the more worthless it will be.

Modern civilization has improved things instead of men. Emphasis on things instead of men comes from the philosophy of human ownership which undergirds our present social organization. Our civilization is a great world-big physical giant, a titanic idiot, a blind Samson in danger of pulling down the house upon himself.

The inevitable effect of exalting things above persons in any civilization is *ultimately race suicide*. The material standards of living become so high that large families come to be regarded as economic hindrances to ease and success in life. It is easier to head off unbegotten children, or even to behead unborn children than to furnish them the things necessary to their life and training. So race murder ensues. If any one doubts that materialism increases race suicide, just let him reflect that usually the more wealthy a people become, the fewer children they allow in their families. God Almighty, in any civilization, is on the side of the little children born, unborn, unconceived even. When civilization begins to interfere with the divine rights of young life, it is instantly damned, its decay is begun.

The divorce evil comes largely out of considering things more highly than persons. Bodily ease and pleasure become the supreme consideration in life. With many, marriage itself becomes purely a physical matter; the spiritual elements pass out of it; the home disintegrates; the holy sentiments that uphold it and hold it together are gone. Children come to be regarded as unnecessary baggage on life's pleasure trip.

With such views of life, marriage either dissolves or becomes a private monopoly in legalized prostitution.

When we come to consider persons and things in life, we run *slam against the question of ownership or stewardship*. Ownership of things as the motive of civilization puts things in front of persons, for it makes the possession of things the end of life and effort. Stewardship as the controlling principle in life places persons above things, for it takes the personal God into the life of men who impels them to use things in the service of other persons who are made in the image of God.

He who imagines that he owns thinks himself free to spend absolutely as he pleases what he owns. He who begins to spend as he pleases what he thinks he owns will soon be spending more than he can produce; and so, he is finally forced to want or to exploit his extravagances out of the production of the world's honest workers. Thus the delusion of ownership runs rife into worldliness. Or else, men who think they own things come to feel a thrill in the fancy of ownership and the desire to own more becomes the passion of life. So comes the miser, the oppressor, the dishonest trader, the grafter, the exploiter, the robber. We are on the verge of having a civilization of toilers, exploiters, spendthrifts.

Ownership as the motive in life may operate industry and commerce while it is running down-hill. We are on the downward slide now. Stewardship drives business uphill.

If things are allowed to reign over the souls of men, civilization *loses the sense of its own soul*. "Under the tutelage of the German menace, millions came clearly to see that force and machinery and organization and wealth and even science—all put together—are not enough; that a man or a nation may have all these and still have no life worth living; on the

contrary, may be a curse to the race."¹ Materialism, in the outworking of ideas and events, undermines civilization, and ends either in autocracy or anarchy, playing havoc with the human soul.² Conscience gets dull. Right loses its power over men. God is forgot, and that spells death for any civilization, as history shows.

The second symptom of the serious sickness of our modern world-civilization is—shall we dare to say it?

2. *The White Man's Exploiting System*

There are two ways for a man or a nation to make a living; produce it or exploit it; production is making it ourselves, exploitation is making somebody else make it for us. The slow-moving, satisfied, colored races are contented to live on little, and so produce very little compared to their man-power. The modern white races have become the greatest producers of wealth in all history; but they produce not for service, but for selling, and their inordinate wants for material things run so far beyond their supply of raw materials and their productive energy, that they exploit more than they produce. They are the master-exploiters of mankind.

The white man has largely *built his civilization on exploitation*. The white races are now organized for exploitation of one another and for the exploitation of the colored races. In the middle of the fifteenth century, the colored hordes of Asia and Africa had crowded west and north until there was left for the white man only a little corner of territory in the northwest of Europe.³ The white man would have been crushed at that time by the colored races, but for the fact that just then the New World was discovered. That opened up islands and continents for white hands

¹King, *A New Mind for a New Age*, p. 92.

²Joseph Fort Newton.

³Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color*, etc.

to develop; it put the white man to building ships; it placed him in control of the seas. He then began to organize business on a world scale. The colored races submitted to his exploitations.

But now there is another turn in the tides. The colored races are beginning to assert themselves. They found out in the Russo-Japanese War that they could adopt and adapt the white man's methods in industry, science and war and whip the white man. Japan, India and China are now heaving with unrest and ambition and resentment. Still to add to the white man's perils, the World War, really a civil war among the white peoples of the world, broke out and killed over thirty-five millions of white men, the flower of the white race, decimated the white man's accumulated wealth and left seeds of bitterness and discord that make it impossible for the white nations to co-operate in confidence among themselves any more. There is a titantic struggle ahead; the crisis of the white man draws near; if it is a question of man-power and undeveloped resources, the colored races will win the day. He has by trick of trade or by force of government taken economic control of the backward races. For instance, he took the New World from the Red Man and brought the Black Man over to work it for him. He scours the earth in search of plentiful raw material and cheap labor, and then speaks every language of human want to find a market for the things he can force the world's cheap labor to make out of its raw material. The undeveloped countries are at the white man's mercy; Asia, Africa, and South America are laid under tribute to the white man's exploiting system. The world's principal markets and trade-routes are in white hands.

Our planet is now under the scheme of pale-faced exploiters. The white man's business organization is the most gigantic power on earth. It sways every-

thing. Ships, railroads, newspapers, business corporations, armies and navies are its threads; governments and banks and educational systems are its knitting needles. It has sewed up the world in a bag. That it is primarily a system of exploitation rather than service is shown by its large production and sale of such evil powers over men as whiskey and opium and by its long list of habit-forming, enslaving luxuries. A large part of what it produces is intended for use in the exploitation of men instead of supplying their needs, for controlling men instead of serving them. The white race holds sway over the colored races by means of commercial and political methods. Unless commerce is refined and humanized there is bound to be a rise of color against white supremacy. Such aspects of the white man's business practices as stock-gambling, dealing in futures and real estate speculation, which play a large part among white men themselves in the control of business, are exploitations outright, pure and simple, and nothing else at all.

Much as the white man is producing for the good of the world, his exploiting methods are the running sore of modern civilization. This running sore is torn wide open before our eyes in the chilling, killing contrast between the senseless luxury and dire want among the different classes of white people themselves in all the leading nations; nowhere else in all history has there been so much wealth and so much want. It is bursting out in class struggle between capital and labor throughout the white man's world. It is causing a violent reaction against the white races of the red, brown, black and yellow races, which threatens finally, if allowed to continue, to rip our present world civilization in two.¹ So far had this break between colors already gone, that when the white nations of the world in exploitive rivalry broke forth in 1914 into war

¹Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White Supremacy*.

among themselves, there ran all through the bazaars and clubs of Japan and India and China the sibilant whisper: "The East will see the West to bed." The organized exploitive might of the Caucasian races is already becoming a threatening symptom of our civilization.

So far has the white man gone in the exploitation of the world that covetousness has become his outstanding sin. Our chief trouble with Japan, so threatening a few months ago, is that the Japanese have dealt with white peoples until they are now becoming as covetous as the whites themselves. The white man's covetousness is now armed well with all the frightful, fatal weapons of civilization and will wreck the world unless it is uprooted or restrained. White men confront such a questioning of our accepted property institutions as the world has never seen since the days of the Hebrew prophets and of Jesus.¹

The third symptom of disease in our modern civilization is

3. *The Struggle Between Capital and Labor.*

So long has this been discussed that we are used to it and tired of it. It is a chronic disease of our civilization. It must be cured or it will ultimately kill.

In the complex life of our civilization, *Capital and Labor are mutually and delicately interdependent.* They are the faith and works of industry.

Some short Capital and Labor parables:

A man's two hands fell out with one another—and he was left without arms.

A man's two feet got in a bad humor and kept getting further apart every step until—he was split in twain to the top of his head.

A woman's two eyes got jealous of each other and every wink they moved further around until—she couldn't see in front of her at all.

¹*Men and World Service*, p. 22.

Do Capital and Labor represent the male and female in industry?

Capital is strong and controls; Labor endures and produces. There is happiness when they agree; but when they disagree, misery.

Capital is past labor; labor is future capital. They are convertible and can be measured by a common unit, the dollar.

There are two classes of people in all civilization: the "haves" and the "have-nots." Close and necessary as Capital and Labor are to one another, each of them has become the symbol of class-consciousness for these classes. Class feeling identified with Capital, and class feeling identified with Labor are twin perils in our civilization. Under our present economic arrangements, as civilization is more highly developed, its people are in increasing numbers divided into these two classes; Capital and Labor, growing more intimate and complicated all the time, become the symbols and the weapons of these two class interests, and the feeling between these two classes becomes more violent until civilization itself swirls around the vortex of a revolution.

Class War: Strikes and lock-outs are war. In this war, soldiers are not shot at first. But men and women are driven into want; and afterwards the shooting begins. The saving circumstance is, that there are in our civilization people, workers and consumers, who cannot be aligned in organization with either Capital or Labor.

In the struggle between Capital and Labor it makes no difference which wins—whichever wins, both are totally ruined. Capital has tried to get all the profits in America; in Russia Labor is trying to get all the profits; both are failing. The more organized Labor gets, the worse off we are. The more organized Capital gets, the worse off we are. For both these are

minority classes already armed with immense power in the modern struggle and what either or both of them get as such only intensifies the struggle. The hope of peace in modern industry is that power which is held neither by organized labor nor by organized capital.

But there are already enough people and interests gathered in both these camps, Capital and Labor, to make serious trouble. If Capital is to be class-conscious and class-aspiring, the greater its profits the more dividing and damning its power among men. If Labor is to be class-conscious and class-aspiring, the higher its wages and the shorter its hours, the more dividing and damning its power among men.

A World-wide Struggle! All races are being gathered into the Labor class. A few of all progressive nations are becoming capitalists. "Nowhere—absolutely nowhere—can white labor compete on equal terms with colored immigrant labor; the grim truth is there are enough hard-working colored men to swamp the whole white world."¹ An international oligarchy of the financial interests of the great powers, using the international political machinery to control the undeveloped resources and the labor power of the world for the profit of the owners of concentrated wealth in the great industrial nations is one of the possibilities of the present situation.² If the cheap labor and the colored races cannot be brought by immigration to the countries where Capital has built factories, then Capital will invest itself in factories in the countries where it can get cheap labor.

The Bottom of the Trouble. Here are two men. One says, "I am going to invest as little money as possible and demand as much profit as possible." The other says, "I work as few hours as possible each

¹Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White Supremacy*, p. 270.

²Ward, *The New Social Order*, p. 13.

day and demand the highest possible wages for my work."

Now what is the difference between these men? Why, the only difference between them is they are twin brothers. And the trouble is, the devil is in both of them. One is the devil wearing a necktie and the other is the devil in overalls. Each is a type of a class. They are pulling civilization to pieces. One is Capital; the other is Labor.

Both of these are mad with the same mania, possessiveness. They have forgotten that God is the Owner of all and their Father. In their struggle for possession, they are no longer brothers; they are savages armed with the powers of civilization, swayed by the primal possessive instinct of animals, fighting one another to the ruin of all concerned.

Organized Capital may be Christian if it uses its power for the sake of all humanity. Organized Labor may be Christian if it uses its power for the sake of all humanity. Only vitalized and applied stewardship will put organized Capital or organized Labor into the service of humanity.

The fourth sign of the disintegration of our civilization is—

4. *The Spirit of War.*

Nothing is safe on earth, for the spirit of war is still among human beings. That we have recently had actual war is not so bad as that we still have it in the hearts of men. War is hate in explosion. No civilization can hold together that holds people that hate each other.

Horrible War: We were coming out of the church. Bang! went off two pistols the same instant. Through the smoke we saw two men falling. They writhed and gasped and died. Two of our neighbors in a fit of hate had shot each other dead. That night two

widows and two homes of orphans wailed in the same street.

That was a double murder in our town. Horrible? Yes! But instead of two little pistols, think of millions of guns and cannons; of thousands of battle-ships and battleplanes and submarines; of seas of poison gas. Instead of two men dead at home, think of tens of millions of men dead, stiff and cold on a foreign field. Then you have glimpsed the horror of war. So great and widespread is the horror of war that it can be seen only in specks.

And war is still on. It never stops. When the nations are not firing guns, they are making guns. They are loaded all the time. An armistice is just an army standing. Whether armies stand or march, it is still war. What we call peace is only periodic states of armistice; the shadow of death is upon civilization so long as the spirit of war, however faint, flickers anywhere among men. An issue may be precipitated any time, then civilization goes into eruption. The reparations question, the Bolshevistic propaganda of Russia, the arrogance and cruelty of Turkey, the unrest of the colored races of the East, all these are issues: live coals aglow in the powder magazines of racial and national hate. Armies and navies, day and night, stand tense at attention. At the faintest spark, another conflagration may start at any time. In such suspense, nothing in civilization is secure.

And the sad thing is, if hate stays in the human heart, the *further civilization advances in its present trends, the surer and more cruel and more destructive war becomes.* For hates get organized. Limitation of armaments is a snare and a delusion. Arms can be limited for a little while when nations think they are at peace; but when war breaks out and life depends upon fighting strength, men and governments will no more throw down any of their arms than they

will voluntarily amputate their limbs. Hate is a venomous serpent coiled in human hearts; it sleeps harmless there in times of quiet. But once aroused a rattlesnake does not extract his own fangs. Nations in war never disarm themselves; in peace they are not using their arms. If war keeps growing more bitter, civilization cannot survive it.

The chief cause of war is *the idea of men's unconditional ownership of property*. Ownership of property takes several forms; it is tribal; it is personal; it is corporate; it is national. Nothing so stirs hate in men as denial of their ownership of what they claim. The property question was involved in the trouble between Cain and Abel; there started murder and war. Whatever our theory of property, when property gets involved in a contest, those who regard themselves as the owners of it, call into the conflict their strongest defenders which are their national governments. In international conflicts, therefore, all property is nationalized; in time of war, all civilized combatants become socialists, at least temporarily and to the limits of their respective nations.

For instance, how did the World War start? This way: There were in one group about sixty millions of human beings who thought they owned a part of the earth, and they were trying to grab some more of it. This group went by the name of Germany. Another human group of about fifty millions thought it owned some of the earth, too, and was reaching out for more, France; England, another human group, had the same idea and the same grasping desire. So also, Italy, Russia, Austria, and other European nations, to say nothing of Turkey and Japan. All these national groups of people, holding parts of the earth and scratching for more of it, finally scratched out so far that they began to scratch one another. Then there was the combined growl of the lion and the bear and

the eagle and the tiger, fierce animals, watchdogs of national possessions, symbols of national hatreds. Thus the Great War broke out and for nearly five years a flame of hell-fire flared out over the entire earth. In this war, more property than the total wealth of North America was destroyed. If instead of the World War a simultaneous earthquake in both the Atlantic and the Pacific had rolled a flood over the whole of the United States of America and buried all its accumulated wealth into the depths of a new ocean, the world would have been better off than it was at the close of the war. The World War was the hate of the nations kindled for one another by their denial of one another's ownership of the earth. It blew off in wholesale destruction of wealth.

III. SURE REMEDIES.

(1) *Restore the supremacy of souls over things.* As already urged, the reign of things, the rampant commercialism, the blind materialism of our day is *a death-chill upon our civilization*. If we feel easy about it, it is because the soul of our modern humanity is already nearly frozen. The only cure for it is a rewarming with the sense of God's presence and power in the souls of men, restoring them to a divine mastery over material things. The economic disturbances of our civilization are due to the fact that we have never given play to the economic force of Christianity.

The great religions of history have come from the countries in which the people live in tents.¹ We must re-learn the joy and the might of the simple life. The world's wealth is in its original men. By these and their works it is a world, and not a waste.²

¹Bouck White, *The Call of the Carpenter*.

²Thomas Carlyle.

What is civilization, any way? Iron rails, wires, wireless receivers, paper, printing presses, coins, mints, houses, adding machines, sidewalks, roads, school-houses, court-houses, shoes and coats, shirts and ties, collars, buttons, knives, spoons, saws, hammers, drills, and a million other things. That's all it is to millions of us—just a complexity and a confusion and a luxury of things. Human beings covered up and enmeshed in mere things! Modern civilization is now doomed, if we cannot be saved from this smothering, damning, blighting conception of human life. Ants are more than the holes they dig. Birds are more than their nests. People are more than food and raiment and shelter. Redeemed souls must be lifted into supremacy over mechanical forces and dead things. Vital Stewardship in the churches is our hope. The churches are not the creatures and decorations of civilization; they are its creators and transformers; not its children, but the womb from which it is born.

All material things under men's control are used either in obedience or disobedience to God. It is by men's use of material resources, powers, things, that they will either complete or destroy civilization; or else, get themselves destroyed.

Some men look at a city and see only roads, and factories, and walls, and roofs and pavements and the like. Others look further in and see on the inside of the houses the furniture and machinery and raw material and finished products. Again others have eyes that penetrate further still; they look inside the safe of the administrative offices and banks; they see the stocks and bonds and mortgages and deficits and balances that indicate the ebb and flow of business. But men that really think look further in than any of these; they see the twitching muscles and the glistening nerves of men all through the city's material and

machinery. But to God's seers, walls, roofs, pavements, wheels, engines, raw materials, finished products, safes, bonds, stocks, balances, muscles, nerves are all transparent—God's light pierces them all—God's seers see the motives in men's hearts and brains where God or Satan is enthroned and from which all the affairs of the city and all the affairs of civilization are controlled. "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself,"¹ was the request of a heathen king; but it displayed deep insight into the values of life. A Christian civilization would be "all things under men's feet."²

(2) *Put the white men's business organization into the service of the race.*

The cause of the white men's exploitiveness is *an overdevelopment of the possessive instincts* of human nature among the white peoples. It has been released by a general acceptance in the Caucasian world of the falsehood of men's ownership of what they possess. It comes about among us by a denial of the economic teachings of the Bible and repression of the economic impulses of Christian experience. The cure is a re-study of the first days of the first Christian church of Jesus Christ and a reacceptance of Christianity itself in its economic as well as its religious aspects.

The white man cannot much longer hold control of civilization unless he rediscovers service to mankind instead of the possession of things as the standard of greatness which Jesus Christ set up for the individual man; *the greatest race is that which renders the greatest service to mankind*. The white man's days of supremacy are nearly over, if he still counts on racial superiority and material possessions to hold his own. He will be a growing offense to the colored races. Political arrangements continued much longer for the

¹Gen. 14: 21.

²Heb. 2: 6-8.

economic exploitation of the colored races will precipitate a chronic world-conflict. We are now at the pass where it is either altruistic co-operation for the whole human race, or it is selfish cross-fire between the colors and races and nations of men. The issue is Commercialism or Christianity—which?

Perhaps the biggest international question before mankind to-day is, *Shall Commercialism or Christianity develop the colored countries?* If Christianity, for instance, shall lead in the development of China, Chinese resources will be available for the good of all mankind. But if Commercialism develops China, China will come, when she is strong enough, into the council of nations, armed to the teeth, to hold her own and ready to fight any race that opposes her getting more of the world's resources. So with all the Orient.

Only a revival of original Christianity strong enough to make *service instead of possession the economic motive of the white man's business* can save the white man's leadership in our civilization. The surrender of the Christian churches in both North America and Europe to the power of such a revival as will establish the reign of God's people over material things is an immediate necessity to our present world civilization. Materialistic prosperity will be the ruin of America and poverty and economic collapse will be the ruin of Europe, if America and Europe do not soon find themselves borne together on the flood-tide of a religious revival that makes men everywhere brothers in the use of this world's goods, because all are sons of the same Father. The keynote of this revival immediately necessary in preservation of civilization is the Stewardship of all Christians to God in their material possessions. A revival that renews belief in God as the Father of men will save the white peoples of the earth; but a revival that vitalizes belief in

God as the Owner of the earth will make the white peoples the saviors of mankind and of modern civilization. For after it, they will conduct their business throughout the world,—not as owners of the earth as they do now, but as stewards of the true God and servants of mankind.

But along with this revival in the churches of the white countries there will have to come *radical changes in the educational systems of the white nations*. For along with such a revival in our churches, there must be trained a generation of industrial and commercial administrators and workers who are able to hold the white man's business system together in strict service to the entire race of man. No state educational system, without the help of Christian churches, can train this new type of business man so sorely needed wherever white people and colored people deal together. Our churches brought back in a general revival to have a conscience that works economically as did the conscience of the members of the first church will have to enter the field of industrial education. This, the next step in Christian education, is the largest educational opportunity that Christian churches have ever had. It is to be outlined in another book.

It is still problematic as to whether our modern civilization will stand until the teaching and the practice of Stewardship can be made general and effective in the white man's business. But if collapses come in our civilization, they will perhaps come in spots. The whole thing cannot fall at once. The hope is that each local collapse may serve to emphasize the necessity of teaching and applying Stewardship.

(3) *Produce the most possible and consume the least possible of wealth.*

Now we are mostly doing just the opposite, *maximum consumption and minimum production* is the present drift. By this route we are speeding down

grade. Advertising has become a science, an art, a business. Its one purpose is to get consumers. The show windows of our stores do not simply advertise; they break down our capacity to say "No" to our wants. The question with us is not, are the things produced needed, but are they bought?

The daily paper is the great common educator. Its great effort is not to make producers, but consumers; not to get people to serve, but to get them to buy. It is given largely to advertising, and advertising luxuries mostly at that.

Selfish traders and selfish stockbrokers who think of only their own gains are parasites. They have just as much intelligent interest in the fundamental social human processes of economics as a bunch of flies gathered at the bung-hole of a molasses barrel have in the sugar cane industry. Swat 'em!

Somebody has said, "If you want to get rich quick in this day, get your money invested in a five-cent luxury in reach of our working people, so they can ape the rich in the enjoyment of it." The Parisian crowd was in a particularly desperate and dangerous condition because the industries of Paris had been largely luxury industries, and much of her employment parasitic on the weakness and vices of fashionable life.¹ The fiery path that France walked afoot just before her Revolution we have thrown up into a burning highway and millions now speed over it in automobiles.

But in the midst of this orgy of spending, consuming, wasting, we are producing as little as we can. Capital and Labor, the male and female of industry, are in a pout and the household is in a row. They are fighting and scratching each other with strikes and lock-outs. And peoples bound together in a luxurious civilization are all the time at the verge

¹Wells, *The Outline of History*, p. 371.

of starvation. This cannot last; something must happen.

There is coming a crash when our modern civilization will fall from a basis of pampered wants to the level of elemental needs; the innate passion for equality among human beings, the reaction from waste and material extravagance among men, the lure of the simple life, the enlarging vision of world need, a Stewardship revival in the churches that lifts souls above things, the increasing number of inventions that cannot be used and enjoyed individually and selfishly as the radio and printing press, are all making this drop inevitable. Continued war will bring it, if nothing else does. Christian business men can hasten and prepare for this crisis by investing in necessities only and by urging even selfish business men to invest part of their capital in the manufacture and exchange of necessities against the day of collapse when luxuries go under the ban of a righteous public opinion.

Restrain consumption; back to the simple life. Leave off the luxuries.

No individual has a right to insist on a higher standard of physical living than the average citizen of his country has unless it is incidentally necessary to him in rendering his best service to his fellowman. No nation has a right to a higher standard of living than that of the average of mankind unless it is necessary in order to render its best service to the world at large. But all this has to be voluntary; it cannot be enforced. Vital Christianity, if restored to its original power and put into economic touch with our modern world, will bring it about.

This restraint of consumption cannot be brought about by law. It will have to come by religious conviction and education. The severer moral test of any people is not what it produces, but what it

consumes. Only the lordship of Jesus Christ in men's souls made effective economically in their dealings with one another can bring back the simple life into civilization.

Multiply production of the vital, religious, educational, sanitary necessities of life.

At present our civilization is built on possession; it must be rebuilt on production. This means Stewardship instead of ownership; this means men above things. The abundance of our natural resources and the efficiency of our mechanical appliances give the individual American the working force of thirty men.¹ The efficiency engineers are preaching what to them is a gospel, that the object of economic organization is not to make money but to secure the maximum production of goods. They are not afraid of over-production, declaring that we have never yet produced all the things the people need, but have simply failed to make it possible for them to use the things they have produced.²

Value the creator of a social value more highly than the possessor of it. The way for Labor to get control of industry is not by restricting output in labor union, but by the individual worker increasing production, saving, investing and insisting on Stewardship in the administration of industry.

Let vital Christianity enter as a factor into production. Put it into industrial education and work. Christianity kindles the imagination in creative work and saves the worker from monotony. Christianity furnishes an adequate motive to make man do his best work. Christianity sets men into fellowship with one another and makes co-operation joyous.

Three upward steps appear in social history; first, the aristocratic form of society organized around war

¹Col. E. M. House, quoted in daily press.

²Ward, *The New Social Order*, p. 127.

which gave rise to the fighting class; second, political democracy organized around the struggle for capital giving rise to the trading and manufacturing classes; third, social democracy organized around the principle of productive labor opening the way for the rise of the working classes.¹

An Enlarged Market; the needs in our world civilization are so great for the things really useful in multiplying and purifying and enlarging human life, that, curtailing useless consumption all possible and increasing production of goods for real human welfare to the highest limit, we shall never oversupply the demand. There is no danger of a glutted market in the long run.

Instead of pampering a few favored people in imaginary contagious wants, set free the backward millions of earth so that they can worship the true God, take proper food and medicine for their bodies, build comfortable houses, eat sanitary victuals, wear good clothes, develop literature, build educational systems, install machinery, develop the resources of their lands, get into touch with the outside world and begin to live an uncramped life. Saving one great soul, born to lead in a remote country, will mean infinitely more for the enlargement of future markets than selling a shipload of tobacco or coca-cola. Over a billion souls wait now in a state of arrested development for this larger market to bring into their reach the necessities and means of an enlarged life. Instead of waking these people to their needs and supplying them with the real goods of life, our present economic system is exploiting them to get from them the raw materials for luxuries to while away the leisure of the idle rich and the short-day worker at home. But the billion already born and now living in acute need of a market that will supply their enlarging

¹Ward, *The New Social Order*, p. 18.

necessities without blighting their lives with luxuries is not a billionth of the human beings waiting now potentially in the loins of living men and women to be born into the earth as soon as the divorce evil and immorality and race-suicide are stopped in civilization and the unimagined resources of God's earth are released from selfishness and ignorance to support the full life of a multiplied race of man. When we, in sense of our Stewardship to God in material things, stop the consumption of the unnecessaries of life, the unfolding life of the backward peoples and the released birthrate among civilized peoples will make the largest safest market for necessary goods that man has ever had. Ultimately real wealth should be as plentiful among men as air or water. Then there will be no more capital and labor questions.

But this cannot come by revolutions or legislative programs; they delay it. All the world needs to put it on the track to this high state and full life of man is for its common man everywhere to get an experience of God that makes him more anxious to produce than to possess, more anxious to help others than to enjoy things for himself. If the New Testament record is true, that will come when we get back afresh to the experience of the first Christians and go out to live among the people with the fervor of their convictions.

"Make my brother divide the inheritance with me," plead one of many who came to Jesus with the troublesome property question.¹ Jesus' answer was, in point, "I am not concerned about the division of property; I am no judge or divider to settle such incidental questions as the allotting of mere things among the children of my Father." The economic trouble with the world to-day is, men are more concerned about the division of what is already produced than they are about the production of more. The amount of

¹Luke 12: 13.

wealth already produced is hardly a fraction of the almost infinite possibilities of the earth's productions. Yet men are fussing over the trifle already produced, while the productive possibilities of the earth and of man lie in waste. Industry is not a pig-trough for hogs; it is a work-bench for men.

That's a beautiful house on the hill. It is Smith's. But Jones says, "I am going to have that very house." And Jones starts out to get it. He works and thinks and trades and schemes day and night to get a mortgage on it. At last in the courthouse the case is decided. Jones gets the house. Smith moves out; Jones moves in. There is a life-long bitterness between these families. What a pity that Jones did not have the vision to see there were thousands of building sites vacant more beautiful than Smith's, plenty of building material better than Smith had used, many workmen better than those who built Smith's house waiting for a job, architects ready and able to draw plans for a house more magnificent than Smith's. Then there would have been two houses in town instead of one. The real estate deal in transferring the vacant lot at the start, the architect's plan, the sale of the building material for the new house, the work of the builders and many other items would have been a help to the business of the whole community. But best of all the Smiths and Joneses would have been living together as close, friendly neighbors, instead of mortal enemies. What in this case is true of two families and a house in one community is true on a world scale as between families, between men, between classes of men, between nations of men as to houses, lands, mines, oil wells, clothes, automobiles, horses, everything that constitutes material wealth. The world now waits in economic paralysis, even economic retrogression, until it learns this simple lesson from Jesus' teachings. Back then to

the spirit of the first church of Jesus, so that we shall share what is already produced and use it in the production of more goods for the good of all men.

(4) *The Racial Possession of the Earth.*

In absolute terms, there is no ownership of the earth, but God's. Yet God has put the earth into possession of man—Mark it!—of *man* not of *men*. The chief trouble with the world is the property question. The property question comes entirely from the fact that men are not willing for man to possess the earth. Birds and lilies and foxes do not have this trouble.¹ Men organize themselves into firms and corporations and nations and even alliances of nations for the purpose of getting and owning for themselves all of the earth they can. Any man or group of men insisting on sovereign ownership of any part, or thing, of the earth, in that particular claim, denies the existence of God and disowns membership in the race of man.

Here is the seat of our troubles; in property matters, men deny both God and the unity of man. This opens the door wide for sin and crime and war. Our civilization will continue, as always in the past, in a spasm of conflict and uncertainty, until the possession of the earth by man as a race is established.

There are two routes to this goal; one is war; the other is religion. The idea of ownership of parts of the earth by different men and nations of men divides up the earth; it also divides up the race of man into races of men. It leaves out God. It sets up a super-man. It keeps the stronger races in a ceaseless struggle to become the dominant races. This is the war route to the racial possession of the earth. It denies right and deifies might. The strongest race either kills out or enslaves the other races and cruelly

¹Matt. 6: 28f.

takes possession of as much of the earth as it can hold. Then it depends upon power of government and army and trade to keep it in possession.

The conviction that there is one true God and that he is the Father of men and the Owner of the earth, and that men are sons and stewards of God and brothers to one another in all their possessions, unites men consciously into one common race and unifies the earth into one common possession of the race. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the only road to peace on earth. It does not hang upon governments; it does not use armies. It simply offers a Saviour to men and depends upon a direct experience of God by the peoples of earth that will finally bring the majorities in all the nations to know God as the Owner of the earth. Then all modern governments under the sway of the majorities of their own citizens will succumb to this truth and no longer need armies to defend their possessions against other governments. Trade will be permeated with this truth. Men aware of the unity of their race will possess the earth in trust for the great Father of the race. When the members of the local churches of Christendom, freed from all forms of ecclesiastical control, come to face Christian brothers throughout the world in the same way that all the members of the first Christian church faced their brothers in one city, there will begin a general relaxation of the present economic tension. Individual men and governments will take their places in human life as trustees of God and the race. Will this ever occur? Well, it is no unreasonable expectation, if the Almighty Spirit is really in the churches and if there are in the churches any people with ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. It is simply and entirely a question of whether the experience of the first Christians was genuine and

whether it is now capable of general repetition in our modern churches.¹

This earth has a glorious place in God's plan. When he made it, *five* times he pronounced it good, and the sixth time he declared it *very good*.² We are not to despise the earth; it is God's footstool, a part of the furniture of the very throne-room of the Almighty.³ It is one of many mansions of the Father's house.⁴ God dwells in it; God's only begotten Son lived and died on it, was buried in it, and rose from it. God's spirit still works everywhere in it. It is peopled by a race of beings made in God's image, and capable of receiving him and rebelling against him. The smallest packages are often the most valuable; just so, this earth, among the smallest of myriads of worlds, may be the most important of all.

Did you ever stand in a birth chamber at midnight? There was the wail of a mother, the cry of a child and the glad heart of a father. It was a solemn hour, a new born soul cast in God's likeness and deathless as its Maker had been launched on earth.

The birth of one little human babe is enough to prove that, despite all its present sin, the earth is still saturated with divine energy and mystery. But how solemn a place the earth becomes to us, when we reflect that the mysterious energies are already at work here sufficient to produce over five thousand immortal souls every hour. This too, against the paralysis and destruction of the world's sin, excess, crime, venereal diseases, war, death. God is still here; or else, this could not be. With sin put out of it, millions of God's children, capable of living and reigning with their Father in this and other worlds, could be begot and born and raised every hour. Who knows but that it is the plan of God to clean up this earth and

¹As recorded in Acts 4 and 5.

²Gen. 1.

³Isa. 66: 1.

⁴John 14: 1.

make it into a vast maternity ward for populating other worlds with immortals?

At any rate this Earth has Immense Possibilities for any use that God wills to make of it.

Away with the lying economics that makes people think that the earth's resources will soon be exhausted; coal and oil depleted; the meat supply given out; seeds sterile and soil barren; sun fading and earth freezing; the race of man finally outgrowing the planet and dying of universal starvation. There is just one miscalculation in all these dismal forecasts of the future for this world; they leave God out of the reckoning, who can preserve this world or make new ones at a word.

Away with the Malthusian lie, the notion that this earth is too small to support the human race grown to its full limits. Many honest and benighted believe it. But it is an economic belief that has come up like a black fog out of the dark pit. It is infidel; it is devilish; it assumes that men are not God's children and that this is not God's world. It accuses God of forsaking his own household. It justifies disease, pestilence, war, sin, wholesale death on the supposition that only a stunted, depleted, cramped, smothered human race can find room and sustenance on an accidental, contracted, decreasing planet like our earth. This hellish, hopeless, godless notion is the ground work of the present prevalent property theories of our civilization. The devils in hell laugh when a strong man, or a business corporation, or a government or an alliance of nations acts on this ethics; it means the dwarfing and the destruction of part of the race. Its chief assumption: there is no God in the economic world.

Repeat it again; the atheistic evolutionist is not so dangerous to the present world as the atheistic economist. The former tries to shut God out of the earth at some remote past age; the latter is trying to shut

God out of the present, practical life of man. The atheistic evolutionist insists that the world started without God; the atheistic economist insists that it is still going on without God. One is philosophic atheism, the other is practical atheism. One says there were monkeys among the ancestors of men; the other teaches that men are still hogs. One is atheism in the air; the other is atheism on the ground. One is atheism in mere thought; the other is atheism in factories, shops, trains, ledgers, governments, armies, bombs. One is atheism on behavior in quiet library, laboratory, study; the other is atheism on the outside, gone mad, exploding, wrecking the world.

Even Charles Darwin perhaps got the suggestion of his theory from a study of the economics of Malthus.¹ The theory of the survival of the fittest springs from the idea that the earth is insufficient for the life upon it. Economism is the supreme issue of our present religious situation, not evolutionism. Not speculation about the first chapters of Genesis, but an experience of the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles will save the world now.

The earth too little for man! Bosh! The present whole human race could be settled in the one state of North Carolina and every man, woman and child now living in it given about one hundred square yards of ground to live on—and science has hardly begun to show yet what a plot of soil that size can be made to produce under intensive cultivation. All mankind could find standing room in one common county of the same state. If some solar thunderbolt were to strike the earth and kill every human now living on it, the whole race could be buried decently in one cemetery less than fifty miles square, or in one grave just one mile square, and less than two hundred and fifty

¹See Article, Malthus, New Int. Enc.

yards deep. That looks like the earth is already crowded with people! Does it not? Think of it! No more room for big civilized families. Yet fool men strive for more land and more loot, and fool nations fight for more territory and more trade.

Not enough on earth to sustain the race of man if it keeps multiplying—Tut! There are at this moment over four millions of acres of waste land in the populous state of New York, mostly in large estates. Only a few generations ago grapefruit, Irish potatoes, and even our Indian corn were not used for food. Hundreds of fruit-bearing plants in the tropics, unnamed and even unknown, may yet become food for man. The oceans are filled with human food, many kinds of it still untasted. Scientific enrichment of the soil even in only small parts of developed countries is just barely starting. Chemistry is still in its infancy; marvels await us. The earth's power is only now beginning to open up to man's uses; we now build one dam across a river at one place and turn the stream there into electricity and carry it in a little wire to another place and use it in making another dam across the same river. Then both these dams can be used in building two more dams until this whole river is harnessed into man's control. Then all the power of one river can be transmitted and used to dam up all the power of another river till all the rivers of the earth shall be caged together into one system of hydro-electric power, if it should ever become necessary. This process is already started; no one knows when and where it may stop. All this power can be used to drive machinery to do man's work; and at this work power-driven machines are used to make more machines for power to drive. By the time earth's coal and oil give out, if that ever be, it is possible that man will be storing up sunshine in the Torrid Zone and in the Sahara Desert and shipping it to the North

Pole and to the South Pole for use in fireless cookers and fireless furnaces. Cooling the tropics with electric fans and warming the frigid regions with imported sunshine, man may yet make the whole globe joyously habitable. Who knows? All this can be done, if men will only realize that the earth is the Lord's and learn to work with him and with one another in the development of it as stewards of God and servants of man. Something of this kind will be the beginning of the New Earth perhaps.¹

With the inventions that man already has, if the worship of God were our supreme joy, we could now lift the hugest organ ever contrived, the greatest orchestra ever trained and the largest choir ever assembled up beyond the clouds and connect them by radio with the whole earth and set them to praising God in hearing of all mankind. That would be "meeting the Lord in the air," for surely he would still be ready to meet "two or three gathered together in his name."

"But that would be an awful waste of wealth," answers some blind materialist. Well, it would cost less than the World War cost. Which would have been better? We shall either give our property to God our Father for the uses he would have it put to among his children, or else we shall have to give it to bear the expense of many more wars. Which shall we do? That depends upon whether the property experience unanimous in the first body of Christians becomes general among modern Christians.

There are just two programs for the world: the military and the missionary.

Oh! for a revival that restores the reign of God in the economic relations of his people! Then in the name and power of God we can save all that is good in our present civilization.

¹2 Peter 3: 13.

*For the earth is not to be annihilated, but renovated.*¹

But was it not destroyed once, by water? Yes! Just like the breakfast dishes were destroyed this morning when they were covered up in water in the dish-pan. The flood did not destroy the earth; it just washed it off. Well, is it not to be destroyed next time by fire? Yes!—all in it that is in God's way will be burned out. But remember, water and fire are the great cleansers.

We forget that a *cleansed earth* is part of God's plan, a part of the Christian's hope. This gives the Christian a deep interest in our civilization; nothing good in it is to be lost; everything wrong in it is to be washed out or burnt out; the whole thing will not be destroyed unless it becomes entirely corrupt. This should nerve Christians for a fight to the finish on earth and in our present civilization. This makes genuine Christianity militant, practical, immediate in its work.

There are for the Christians other worlds than this. But there is also another age on this earth. There is as much said in the New Testament about a New Earth as about a New Heaven "wherein dwelleth righteousness."² The Bible cannot be treated as a railroad time-table to fix the occurrence or the order of future events. There are confusion and controversy when we try to do it, always. Essentially, premillennialists, postmillennialists and millennialists, all three, agree on one thing; sin and selfishness are to be put out of the earth.

With sin actually out of it, is there reason to believe that the earth will ever end? There will be an end of the world, the age, the *æon*, but not of the earth; it may change form, but its matter is indestructible.

¹Rev. 31: 1f.

²2 Peter 3: 13.

IV. STEWARDSHIP THE SUPREME REMEDY

for the present ills of our world. Our modern civilization is an owner civilization. It is built on property, instead of personality. It is pagan in its economics. Its four great maladies as enumerated, the reign of things over the souls of men, the white man's exploiting system, reaching to the boundaries of the world, the struggle between Capital and Labor throughout the modern society, the spirit of hate and war among the nations are fatal diseases of our civilization. Every one of them is a phase of the lie of man's ownership of the forces and resources of the earth. The reign of things over the human spirit is private ownership gloating in material ease and luxury. The exploitation of the earth and man by the white races is the lie of the human ownership of nature set forth in a racial domination of the earth. The struggle between Capital and Labor is the lie of man's ownership of property inflamed in the feelings of the two great outstanding classes of civilization, filling them both with hate and driving them into ruinous conflict. War comes from sensitive national sense of ownership. The center and source of all these troubles is that men and nations and races of men forget the true God and assume that they own parts of the earth with unrestricted rights to take all of it they can get. All the other troubles of our civilization grow out of this pagan falsehood. The trouble is not corrupt politics; the trouble is rotten economics. The only cure is to replace ownership with stewardship in the economic thought and life of men. This can come now only by a world-wide revival of original Christianity mighty enough to renovate our whole economic system.

Ownership divides men in the use of wealth; stewardship unites men in the use of wealth. The antagonisms of ownership, private, tribal, corporate, national,

international, are a quicksand bottom for civilization. The solidarity of Stewardship human, racial, religious, cosmic, Christian, is a rock foundation for civilization.

The might of things over persons, the white man's exploiting system, the conflict between capital and labor, the spirit of war, are all essentially negations of men's stewardship in matters of property. Our civilization is built on the falsehood of men's ownership of property. This is the source of all our troubles, "the root of all our evils."¹ Mammon is our business god.

Count over again the remedies indicated for these diseases of our civilization; restore the supremacy of persons over things. Put the white man's business organization into the service of the human race. Produce most possible and consume least possible of wealth so that mankind may be supplied with life's necessities for larger living. Bring the whole earth into possession of the whole human race. Of all these medicines for our collapsing civilization the basal element, the chief ingredient, the concentrated essence is in Christian stewardship of wealth, the stewardship of all men to God in all use of property.

The principles of stewardship *vitalized* in our churches and *applied* in the business relations of men is the supreme need of our civilization.

¹I Tim. 6: 10.

FINIS.

APPENDIX

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS AND STEWARDSHIP

We Southern Baptists, like most modern Christians, are asleep at the switch. A new situation is upon us. But our new situation has not yet jarred us into new sensations. We are taking things quietly and as a matter of course. We do not realize that we are suddenly caught in

THE CENTRAL SWIRL OF WORLD FORCES

Two world tendencies are crossing each other in the South now; the movement of the world's business through the Panama Canal into the Pacific, and the migration of the white man into the tropics. The South is becoming the cross-roads of the ages.

For instance, we have not yet seen the deeper and wider significance of the Florida boom. It is more than a real estate spurt. It is a focus of some world tendencies.

The larger facts of the situation are covered by the scuffles of exploiters trying to get rich out of dirt and out of one another. Harpies follow the ship of destiny.

The present whirling developments in Florida and the Gulf ports are the first great wave of the southward turn of the white races in our Western Hemisphere. The white man has gone westward through history until he has struck a wall in the east. The white man must now turn southward or northward. It is too cold a reception for him in the North. At this crucial turn in human affairs, the white man has found out how to stay *well* in the tropics at less cost than he can stay *warm* in cold climates. This is the

biggest result of the Spanish-American War and of the digging of the Panama Canal, yet a by-product of these two events. It is the wonder of science and sanitation.

Not only this, we are beginning faintly to glimpse the immense trade we are to have with the tropical countries. The tropics are bursting all the year with profusion of fruits. Much luscious fruit, of which we in the North Temperate Zone do not yet know the name, grows in the warm climates. Much of it is too delicate to ship also. So far we have got very little of it, except the shrivelled bananas pulled green—and they have already made the United Fruit Company fabulously rich. The banana is a mere start in this new trade.

Our Southland is the gateway into the Tropics. The Florida and Gulf coasts are the southernmost breast and nipples of the United States of America. They are destined to be the new center of the Western Hemisphere.

Furthermore, the Pacific Ocean is already seen as the coming naval strategic center of the earth; also, the future commercial center of mankind. This prospect at one time put Los Angeles and Portland and other Pacific ports on the boom. But recurrent earthquakes out there are searing capital from that quarter and forcing it to look for another outlet from the East and the Central West into the Pacific. For this traffic the Panama Canal is the gate. By that route freight does not have to climb the heights of the Rocky Mountains and to cross the wide prairies of the far West to go to the Pacific seaboard; it just slides down the Atlantic slope and the Mississippi Valley to one of the Gulf or Florida ports and out through the Canal into the open Pacific.

In the South we are beginning to feel the thrill and the chill of these immense world movements. The

back-wash of these southward tides of commercialism is already swishing through our Southern mountains.

The development of intense agriculture in our rich soil is well begun under our favorable climate. Its production in cotton and wheat and corn and meat and fruits is soon to be marvelous.

The development of our water power is started, but only started. There is no telling where it will stop. The Duke interests in the Carolinas are only a hint of the possibilities. Manufacturing towns in some sections are springing up as thick as country villages used to be. In a few years most of our farms are to be electrified. Great cities are on the way.

Of course, there will be periodic set-backs in these activities. Booms will swell and burst. But the general movement will be onward and upward. The price of Florida dirt will drop. But it will finally be left in somebody's hands at a high cost; and the permanent holder of it will have to make it produce something in order to keep it. Then real growth will begin.

Some day the financial and commercial center of the globe may be in our South country.

All this puts a new strain upon our Southern Baptist churches. It throws down a challenge of the ages to our Southern Baptist ministers. Materialism and worldliness threaten to balk us. Luxury in our business life and indebtedness in our religious life, automobiles and mission debts, are symptoms of our chilly situation.

The dire poverty of our Southern states just after the Civil War was a providence for us. It kept our people out of touch with the rest of the world while destructive higher criticism was flooding the earth with its books; we could then buy no books but the Bible itself. We were insulated. Our people still believe the one Book. Now we can return in full

faith to the Bible and get aflame with its teachings as to property.

Only Christian stewardship vitalized and applied in our Southern life will keep us from being submerged in the vortex of materialism and worldliness and covetousness now beginning to swirl around us. The Steward League of Baptist Ministers has come at the right time. We are standing together with our bare backs against these chilly southward tides.

OFF THE JOB

In these perils, Southern Baptists are generally piddling and messing. Only a few are at work.

In our Southland where the modern world is coming to a point, there are over three million and a half white Baptists.

Out of these we select just half a million, wage earners at that, nobody but wage earners, working at an average of fifteen dollars a week, only fifteen dollars a week. We let the three millions go. For the moment we count them nil, nit, nothing. In our present calculation, we throw away all our manufacturers, dentists, drummers, contractors, insurance men, doctors, lawyers, even well-paid pastors, teachers, farmers, merchants, bankers, real estate dealers, millionaires—we hold to only half a million daily toilers.

Now here is the point, look: if these half-million wage earners were stewards to the bare extent of rendering a mere tenth of their income to our Baptist work, we should be giving each year *Thirty-nine Millions of Dollars* for all our work, local and general—as much as we are all doing now.

There is no room for us Southern Baptists to boast. Our past bragging is a disgrace. We ought to go off and hide in the ashes, until we have repented. Our present work would be ridiculous, if it were not so

serious. But since Jesus Christ died for us and this is his work, it is tragedy; it is almost sacrilege. O Lord, forgive us and help us to wake!

Until we are shocked into sense of our stewardship, our mission boards and educational agencies may get a few gasps from spasmodic appeals and periodic spurts, but they will be in slow death.

The situation is distressing. Our sorest need is a ministry in our pulpits that will cry aloud as to God's right to all our wealth and spare not in the requirement that we honor God with the firstfruits of our increase. Without this, our Southern Baptist work is doomed to disintegration. There is no other alternative. The process seems to be already begun.

Only two thousand churches with only two hundred and fifty members each, all plain working people earning their bread in daily sweat, led by only two thousand faithful pastors could easily do what all Southern Baptists are doing.

Yes; say it again!

In this count we are throwing away twenty-four thousand four hundred and thirty-nine Baptist churches.

We are throwing away seventeen thousand eight hundred and eight Southern Baptist ministers.

We are throwing away three millions and one hundred and forty-nine thousand Southern Baptists.

We put down 24,439 churches, 17,808 ministers and 3,149,000 Baptists as *Zero!* Two thousand ministers and 500,000 cotton mill girls could do what all of us are now doing for everything, local and general, in our Baptist work.

But the serious thing is not the contraction of our Baptist work: the terrible thing is the paralysis of the souls of our people in covetousness and luxury, freezing in godless materialism.

It is alarming to see how many of our ministers

seem to be satisfied with the present plight of our Baptist work and of our Baptist people. This is the worst symptom of all.

ON TO OUR JOB

Find out where the blows will tell. Then hit hard there. That's the way to be effective. Here is the lick:

When one minister who really believes in stewardship wins to stewardship to the pale degree of the tithe even a wage earner, counting the average wage at \$15 a week and the average earning life at twenty years, he puts \$1,560 into Christian work. If in one year he thus wins 100 such wage earners, he starts \$156,000 to coming into Christian work. If he keeps up this pace of winning 100 each year for twenty years, he opens up the sources for \$3,120,000 to flow into Christian work in a generation.

Can we not find *one* Baptist minister in *ten* in the South who will average winning to the experience and practice of stewardship fifty Baptists a year for ten years? That would give us one million stewards. If this million stewards got the average wage of the world's workers we should then have an income of \$78,000,000 per year for our work. This is a reasonable program, too. Let's get on to it.

Long before the ten years are out, our present divisive issues would be forgot, and Christian stewardship would be looming as the supreme issue among us.

If the discussions in this volume run true to the New Testament and to the conditions of our modern times, Southern Baptists are responsible for a great deal now.

We need to take a long-range view of our Baptist finances. We need to see them in the large. The trouble is we are thinking of them almost entirely in

terms of annual budgets. We are looking all the time for immediate returns. Our concern is about reaping and not about clearing the field and plowing the ground and sowing the seed and cultivating the crop. We are trying to support our work by gathering wild berries in the woods instead of tending plants in the cultivated field.

The Steward League of Baptist Ministers¹ is at work on these larger lines. It does not expect its progress to be mathematical as suggested in the above calculations. But it aims to keep pushing the issue in this general direction.

We have not yet passed the parting of the ways. We have not yet quite achieved the budget plan of finance for our general work. We shall have to leave the budget and go back to the anarchy of special appeals for various phases of our work, or else get stewardship vitalized and applied first in our ministry and then in our churches. One means disintegration of our ranks; the other means unification of our forces for a world task.

¹(Address The Steward League, Mars Hill, N. C.)





